

ULTIMATE GADGET GIFT GUIDE

Stuff

WHAT'S NEXT



**DON'T CALL
IT A SLIDE-
BACK**
THE PRIV
IS HERE



**HEAD TO THE
Stuff
HOLIDAY
WISH LIST**

p31

**DELL
XPS 13**
IN-DEPTH
REVIEW

**GET RICH
PLAYING
VIDEO
GAMES**

GIFTS FOR GEEKS

OOH, WE'VE FELT YOUR PRESENTS

**48
BRILLIANT
IDEAS**

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BD150 JD3 KD120 R0150
QR15.00 SR15 DHS15



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December 2015
Middle East Edition
A Motivate Publication

Dubai Technology and Media Free Zone

Dell recommends Windows.



It leaves room for everything except the competition.

Sure, being the world's smallest 13" laptop looks impressive, but its size is just the beginning. With the world's first virtually borderless infinity display, available with UltraSharp™ QHD+ resolution, configured using an Intel® Core™ i7 processor, Windows 8.1, up to 15 hours of battery life* and built with carbon fiber and machined aluminum, the new XPS 13 is amazing both inside and out. Which is great news for everybody — unless you're the competition.

The new Dell XPS 13. Better by any measure.



*Battery Life based on BrowsingBench test run by Dell in November, 2014. Visit www.eembc.org for more information. System had 150-nits (40%) brightness, WiFi on, 4GB memory, Intel® HD 5500 graphics, Intel® Core™ i5 processor, 128GB SSD and FHD display. Test results should be used only to compare one product to another and are not a guarantee you will get the same battery life, which may be significantly less than test results and varies depending on product configuration, software, usage, operating conditions, power management settings and other factors. Maximum battery life decreases with time and use. Dell XPS 13 is a trademark of Dell Inc. Intel, the Intel Logo, Intel Inside, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Dell, the Dell logo and the Dell badge are trademarks of Dell Inc. ©2014 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.



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BPA **FIPP**

recycle

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WELCOME



The original Nintendo Game Boy is a gadget that I look back on with great nostalgia-tinged fondness. Not because of its vast

library of excellent 8-bit games (although they were indeed great), or because of the countless hours I spent callusing up my thumbs playing *Motocross Maniacs* (which I did), but because it was one of the first 'tech' presents that my parents bestowed upon me at such a young and impressionable age. So unexpected was its arrival in my grubby, 10-year-old mitts that, had YouTube been around at the time for someone to upload my reaction to it, I'm fairly certain the video would have gone viral. I'm not afraid to admit that every present I've received since has been somewhat of a disappointment by comparison (sorry, mum!), never quite capturing the sheer, unbridled excitement of ripping open the wrapping paper and finding that glorious grey plastic brick underneath.

What I'm trying to get at - aside from the fact that I'm forever doomed to find birthdays and other present-related holidays thoroughly underwhelming - is that there is a lot of responsibility that goes into the purchasing of gifts for those closest to you. Which is why this month, we've taken great pains to put together a gift guide that will help you find the perfect present for that special geek in your life. Whether they're the kind that likes to veg out on the couch playing *Halo*, or they're deep in training for the next Dubai Marathon, we've armed you with a whole host of options that will score you some major festive brownie points. So flip to p31 and start making a list.

Oh, and don't forget to leave this magazine lying around, open to the page of something you might like for yourself. Hopefully someone will get the hint. **S**

Mike Priest, Editor / mike@motivate.ae / @MikePriest



THIS MONTH IN STUFF'S DIGITAL EDITION

- Expert digital reviews on all of the reviews inside this magazine
- All-new features and tests designed just for iPad
- Stunning hi-res photos of the hottest tech
- Spiritual fulfilment

WHAT'S HAPPENING ONLINE?

- Up to the minute news and views on everything from Apple to Adidas
- Exclusive video reviews, previews, trailers and gadget challenges
- More games! The latest titles reviewed in full, with in-game galleries and more

Innovation
for a Better Life

WHY BLACK? Only perfect black creates perfect color

Infinite contrast that takes you on an unprecedented visual experience.



Perfect Black,
Perfect Color

LG OLED TV

CES Innovation Award 2015 Honoree [65EG96]



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WIN!
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 - Make a miniature planet
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TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING

Looking to buy something but need a bit of advice? Turn to our *Stuff* Top 10s: our expert listings of all gadgetry, from p72

SMARTPHONES



Samsung Galaxy
★★★★★
King of Android
p72

TABLETS



Apple iPad Air 2
★★★★★
Super slim slab
p73

OUR PRICES
Prices in Hot Stuff are RRP's. Prices in features, tests and Top 10s are the best we could find from a reputable online retailer at the time of going to print.





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11 PAGES
OF THE BIGGEST
STORIES FROM
PLANET TECH

Out back

BlackBerry spotters will recognise this carbon weave material from the Q10. It's arguably not as classy as glass, but it is nicely grippy. The 18MP camera has optical stabilisation, like the one in the iPhone 6s Plus.

HOT
THREE
#1

BLACKBERRY WANTS ANOTHER GO ON THE SLIDE

BlackBerry Priv

Something weird is happening: for years everyone's been trying to make gadgets that are just featureless screens, but now things are getting physical again. The newest iPad (the Pro) has a stylus and a keyboard. Samsung's new Serif TV has legs and sticky-out bits. This is great news for BlackBerry, the master of fiddly parts, and accordingly it has brought out a new Android phone with a slide-out QWERTY. We only need the keyboard to slide the other way to reveal media control keys and we're right back to 2006's Nokia N95. In reality, while it's not the first slider BlackBerry has made, the Priv is no nostalgic throwback. It's an Android for business types who want a proper selection of apps, but who also need proper typing for their memos and proper security for their emails. And it's actually really quite nice: the 5.4in, 2560x1440 AMOLED screen has subtly curved edges, and beneath the hood a Snapdragon 808 processor, 3GB RAM and a 3410mAh battery provide plenty of muscle. Fond as we are of nonconformity, we rather like it.

As hot as... the underfinger crunch of freshly fallen keys
[US\\$700 / blackberry.com](#)

Wait, I know a shortcut...

For time-poor execs, each of the keys can be assigned a long-press shortcut. Maybe 'h' for 'speed-dial home', 't' for 'activate the LED torch', or 'b' for 'compose email to Babycakes'.

Engine upgrade

This is the first smartwatch we've tried that runs on an Intel Atom chip. We'll see what advantages – if any – this will give it, but top of our wishlist would be a battery that lasts more than a day.

**HOT
THREE
#2**

THE FIRST LUXURY ANDROID SMARTWATCH

Tag Heuer Connected

Something you may have noticed about Android Wear is that it's pretty darn affordable. In fact, it's basically impossible to spend more than US\$500 on a Google-powered smartwatch. Or, it was. Clearly, the chuckling Swissmen of the luxury watch industry have also noted this point. Their response has been to dress Android Wear up in something a little more formal – titanium and crystal sapphire, with some custom watch faces that echo Tag's classic watch designs but add nifty smart touches like sub-dials that relay info from apps – and to bump the price up by about four times. It won't give your bank balance the beating that Apple's gold Watch Edition would dish out, but the Connected certainly isn't cheap.

Interestingly, Tag Heuer is offering anyone who buys their Connected smartwatch the chance to trade it in (with some more of your money) for one of its mechanical Carrera watches after two years. Sounds like they're still keen on selling plenty of those, if this whole smartwatch thing doesn't work out.

Ashot as... Iron Man's handshake
US\$1500 / tagheuer.com





Porsche recommends **Mobil 1**

www.porsche.com

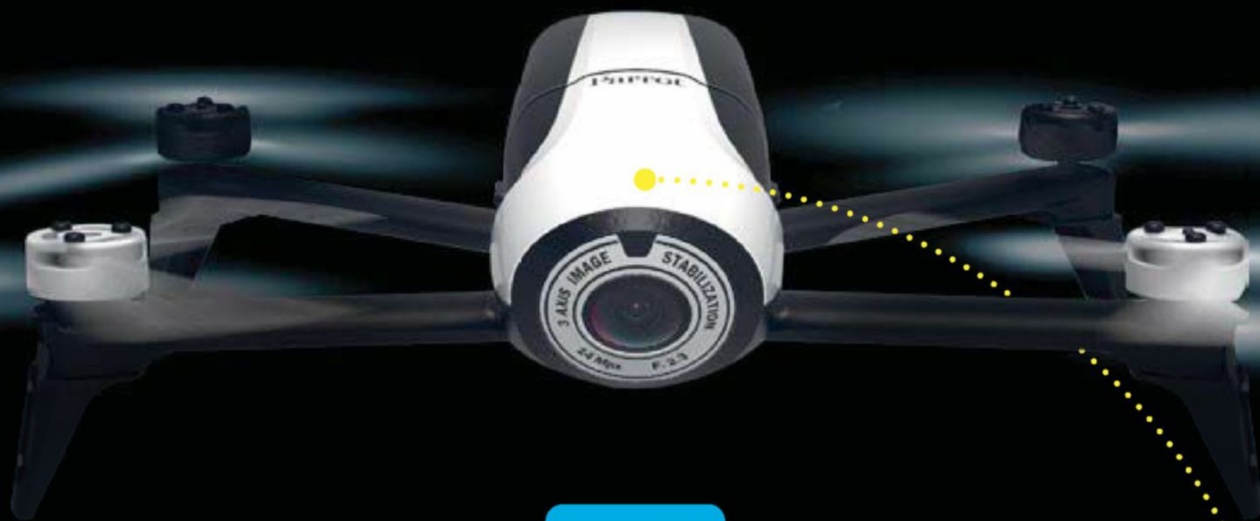
**We don't build compromises.
Only sports cars.**

Porsche E-Performance.

Drive a hybrid car to a one-two win at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. And then to the 2015 World Champion's title in the FIA World Endurance Championship. Such feats were previously unthinkable, but are now reality. Which makes the Porsche 919 Hybrid one of the most important sports cars in motorsport history. Blazing the trail for the future of all production sports cars.



PORSCHE



HOT
THREE
#3

BEBOP STRIKES BACK

Parrot Bebop 2

Time waits for no man — and it doesn't hang around for drones either. More often than not, by the time you've got your quadcopter in the air, narrowly avoided colliding with the tops of some trees and shaken off the attentions of any nearby dogs, there's a 'low battery' warning on the controller and it's time to return to base for a top-up. Parrot's new Bebop ekes every last spin of its four propellers out of the battery, boosting the flying time to 25 minutes, which is more than long enough for it to get all tangled up in some branches and keep the kites company.

Ashot as... a prop blade's leading edge
[US\\$499 / parrot.com](https://www.parrot.com)

With flying colours

Keeping track of the new Bebop in the UK will be tough with this distinctly 'British sky on a dreary day' paint job. We might have to bribe a kid from Games Workshop to give it a custom paint job.

#flames



CLOSE AN EYE. SEE DIFFERENTLY.

EOS 100D

TAKE A DEEP BREATH, CLOSE YOUR EYE
LOOK INTO OUR CAMERA AND DISCOVER
A DIFFERENT WORLD.

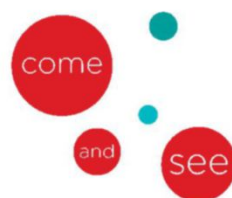
#CLOSEANEYETOSEE



COMPANION APP



Find it in stores now



Canon

SEE MORE, NO BUTS

Sony RX1R II

US\$1,600 / sony.com



Is it a pop-up flash?
No! Is it a pop-up
2.4million-dot
OLED electronic
viewfinder? Yes!

If you, like us, thought Sony's full-frame RX1 was a tad OTT, stand by: its replacement is absolutely bonkers.

● **Don't be fooled by its non-radical appearance.**

The RX1R II looks very similar to its predecessor, right down to the weighty Zeiss 35mm f/2 lens, but it's packing innards that push the envelope further.

There's a new sensor — the back-illuminated 42.4MP full-frame beast that's found in the mighty A7R II — as well as a new autofocus system, a wider ISO range and a pop-up electronic

viewfinder that hides in the little bit where lesser cameras would stash a flash. The autofocus is 30% faster, while the ISO goes from 50 to an owl-a-licious 102,400. That nifty disappearing viewfinder means that, unlike the original RX1, you can compose your shots properly, as if you're looking through the lens.

● **Quick, we can head them off at the low-pass.**

The RX1R II is also the world's first camera to offer an optical low-pass filter that can either be turned on or off. With other cameras, you have to choose between having a low-pass filter (which eliminates the moiré effect in your images at the cost of some detail) or going

without — but Sony has made it selectable, and with 'standard' and 'high' settings. It's something that enthusiast photographers are likely to be, well, enthusiastic about.

● **But filmmakers might be less fanatical.**

This camera can't capture 4K video, which might raise an eyebrow (other recent high-end Sonys have included it), but it will record in up to 1080p at up to 60fps.

As you might imagine, the price for all this high-end wizardry in such a compact device is high. Sony says the RX1R II will cost around €3,500, so probably about US\$3,700 in your money, assuming your money is dollars.

SONY HAS CRAMMED A PROFESSIONAL FULL-FRAME SENSOR AND A VIEWFINDER INTO A COMPACT CAM

SAMSUNG Gear S2

Gets better with
every turn



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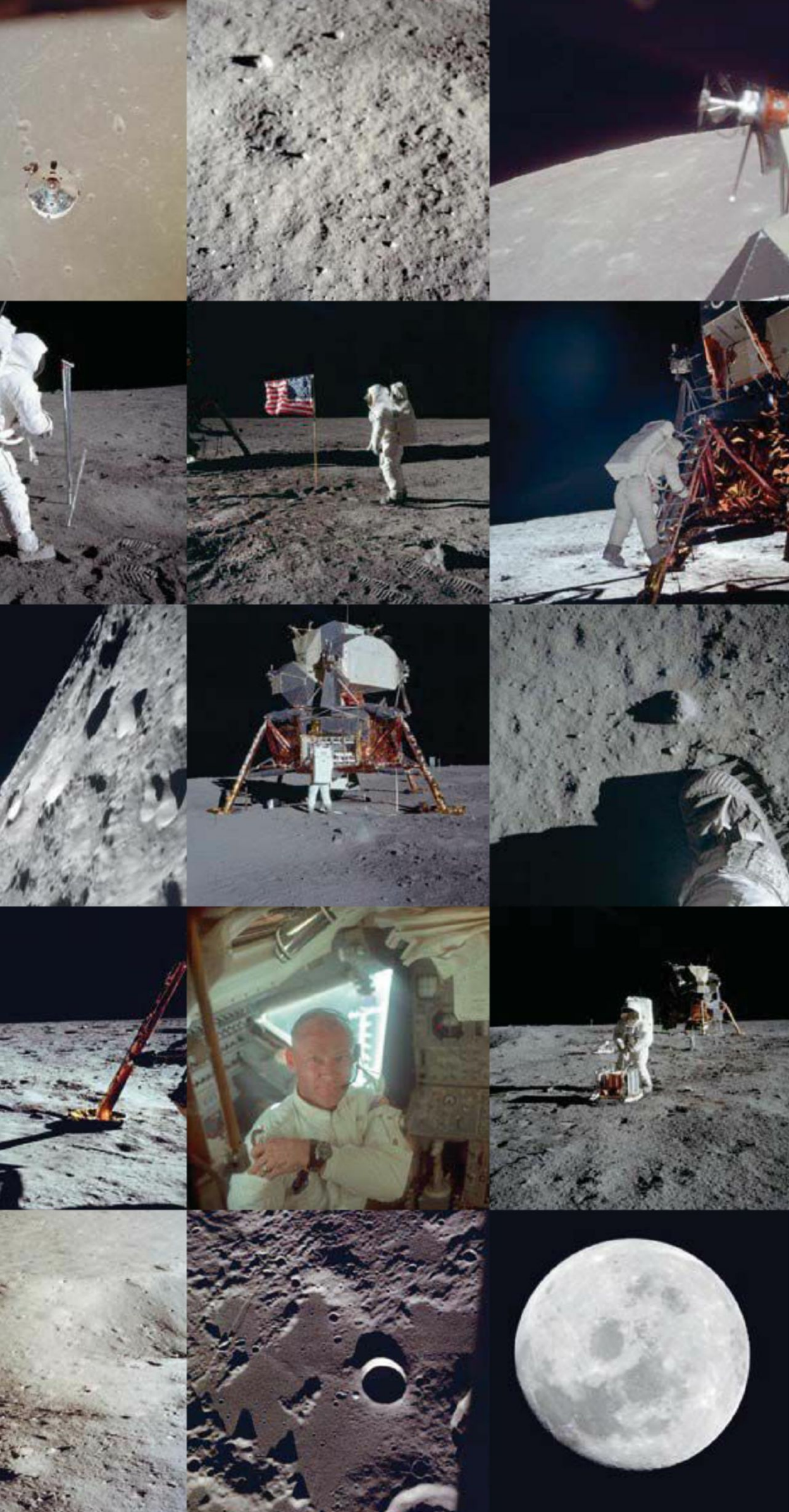
[youtube.com/SamsungMobileArabia](https://www.youtube.com/SamsungMobileArabia)

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SPACE ROCKS

Tenacity comes as standard in the world of the conspiracy theorist. But even the remaining 'faked moon landings' faithful must surely be swayed by the more than 8000 high-res images just uploaded to NASA's Flickr feed ([flickr.com/photos/projectapolloarchive/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/projectapolloarchive/)). Every photo from the Apollo program is now freely browsable and downloadable. Once you've got to the umpteenth photo of a rock you'll think as we did: "You know what? They definitely did go. And I bet they would have loved to have had the Russians along, to help with the rock photography schedule."



NEWS FEED

**SPEEDIER
BROADBAND FOR
ERRYBODY**

UAE telco Etisalat announced last month that its eLife customers can expect a major speed boost to their fibre-based internet connections. Completely free of charge. We love faster internet at zero additional cost. Nice.

**FACEBOOK DISLIKES
DISLIKE BUTTON**

Facebook has revealed a series of emojis called Reactions that can be clicked on instead of the Like button. Irish and Spanish users are trialling the update. In other over-sharing news, Twitter is said to be considering ditching the 140-character limit.

**STRICTLY 360**

From surround-sound radio to recording an HD TV series in the '80s, the BBC has always been a tech pioneer. Most recently, it's released a VR clip of *Strictly Come Dancing*, along with links to make or buy a VR headset (you can also just watch it on desktop). Give it a whirl at bbc.co.uk/taster

START MENU

The latest startups, crowdfunded projects and plain crazy ideas

KICK-STARTER

Tripping the light agnostic **MOLT M.STICK**

You can't put light in a box. Well, you can – this is light in a box. But we mean that you shouldn't put light in a categorical box: this is a bike light, this is a ceiling light, this is a fridge light, etc. You should just say this is a light, and I will use this light for many things, helped by the accompanying apps. I may use it as a bike light, but I can also use it as an audio visualiser, a selfie flash, a visual timer for cooking or exercising and a camping light. Even as a bizarrely obtuse way of getting a weather report. I shall use its magnetic or tripod mount, or optional running or bike mounts. But I will not put it in a box. Unless it's a bit dark in the box.

US\$80 / molt.kr



BACK IT

STACK IT

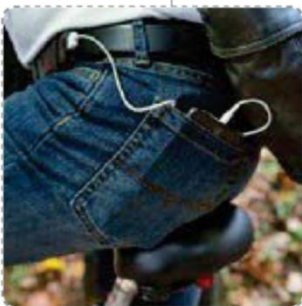
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KICK-STARTER

INDIE-GOGO

KICK-STARTER

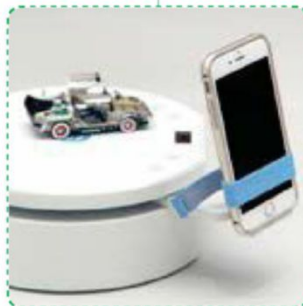
INDIE-GOGO



Waist hot, want not **ION BELT**

There's loads of superfluous space for rent in human clothing. These enterprising individuals have managed to engineer the inclusion of a 3000mAh battery into a belt, with the USB plug on the end of the tail. We hear you: what's the amperage? It's 2.1A, so it ought to charge your phone, or your watch, pretty crisply.

US\$100 / iontechwear.com



You spin me right round **PIXELIO 3D**

There are other 3D scanners out there that makes you do the turning. This one is more laid back, with a rotating arm that whisks your attached smartphone or camera around the thing that you're scanning. More than that, you can attach your camera facing outwards to create precise panoramas or tantalising timelapses.

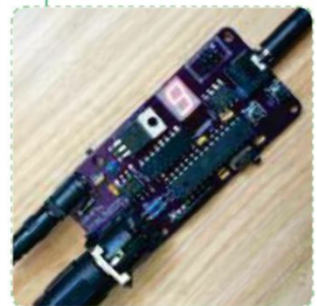
£90 / pixelioscanner.com



Pretty easy puzzle **PUZZLEPHONE**

If you feel like you've seen this before, it might be because you have. The PuzzlePhone concept was out and about in late 2014. But now the Finnish developers are ready to hit the production line with their Google Project Ara-like phone that separates the body, battery and brains into three upgradeable parts.

from €400 / puzzlephone.com



Gram slam **ARCANO SYSTEMS OBSCURA**

The Obscura gathers together a whole gamut of geekiness: Arduino, synth and retro games. Plug in a USB MIDI keyboard, choose one of 16 programmed sound effects and get creating computer game music like you're a Commodore coder in 1989.

US\$105 / arcanosystems.com

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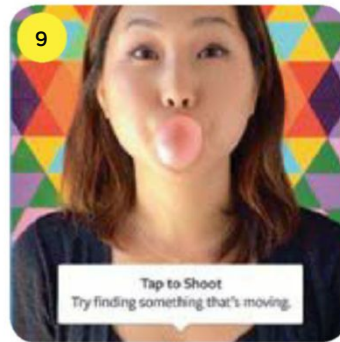
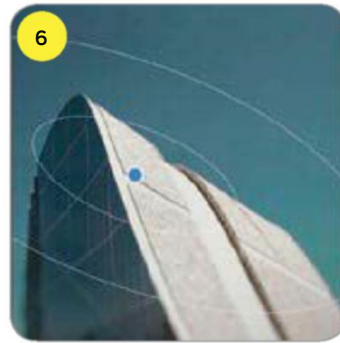
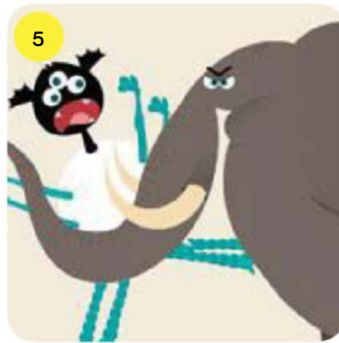
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Based on the Z5 main camera resolution (23MP), speed of autofocus and image quality assessment by 200 UK consumers of the top-selling smartphones of 2015. Specification verification and consumer testing carried out by Strategy Analytics. For more information, go to www.sonymobile.com/testresults/. Sony is a trademark or registered trademark of Sony Corporation. ©2015 Sony Mobile Communications Inc. All rights reserved. Network operator services not included.

↓ APPS

This month's mobile must-downloads



1 Microsoft Arrow

US\$free / Android

Hailing from the same Microsoft Garage workshop that produced the popular Next Lock Screen, this is Microsoft's fully fledged launcher app. Yep, for Android. Get over the weirdness, get with the slickness.

2 Google Chrome for iPad

US\$free / iOS

If you're bang up to date with iOS9 on iPad Air 2 or iPad Mini 4, the latest Chrome browser supports Split View multitasking and handy Autofill fields. You lucky badger.

3 Evel Knievel

US\$1.99 / iOS

Is Evel Knievel still a household name? Do kids still aspire to be motorcycle stuntmen? Or do they now aspire to be coding daredevils? Arduino superpeople? Any which way, this game looks like a blast.

4 Garmin Connect

US\$free / Android, iOS

Out with the blue and in with the new: Garmin's activity tracker app gets a new neon-on-black look. No alarming changes to the data, which is good if you're precious about your activity history.

5 DNA Play

US\$2.99 / Android, iOS

"Where's Damien?" "Upstairs playing with genetics." "What?" "It's an app, where you manipulate DNA strands to watch the real-time effect on monsters." "Good. You can never start them too soon."

6 Snapseed

US\$free / Android, iOS

Some recent Android phones have the ability to shoot photos in the tweak-friendly RAW format, and now the Google-owned Snapseed app will let you edit those RAW files right there on your phone.

7 Agent A

US\$2.99 / iOS

This '60s-style puzzler has you point-and-clicking your way to the discovery and apprehension of enemy spy Miss Ruby La Rouge. Add some modern relevance by playing it in Chinese.

8 Waze

US\$free / Android, iOS

The community-centric sat-nav app gets a design refresh – without losing the charming graphics – and streamlined UI. Reporting traffic jams, speed cameras and petrol station prices now takes fewer taps.

9 Instagram Boomerang

US\$free / Android, iOS

So called because this app creates super-shareable one-second videos that bounce backwards to the start point instead of looping. So not strictly like a boomerang, which is made to stun, not bounce.

NOT JUST AN APP

NETATMO WELCOME

US\$150 / Android, iOS



Netatmo has linked its face-recongnising homecam to the Internet of Things facilitator app, IFTTT.

So now, instead of getting a boring phone notification if a stranger enters your house, you can scare them by launching Luther Vandross and dimming your Philips Hue lights to a shade of raw salmon orange. That'll see 'em off. Equally, converse to what Netatmo has suggested, you can set your IoT-connected house alarm to go off every time your own face is recognised, as a kind of 'In da house!' shout-out to your neighbours. Of course, just like the NFC craze of 2011, what you might also do is turn all this off after a couple of weeks and never use it again.



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FIRST LOOK DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN PS4

Not to be confused with the 1994 Amiga game *Detroit* (a turn-based business sim about the car industry), *Become Human* is the latest in PlayStation's line of 'interactive experiences' that began with *Heavy Rain* in 2010 (or *Fahrenheit* for the PS2 five years earlier, if you want to get pedantic about it).

Detroit started life as *Kara*, a tech demo unveiled by developer Quantic Dream in 2012 that showed a female android being assembled and 'malfunctioning' by exhibiting emotion, before convincing her creator to let her

venture out into the world anyway. It was kind of a cross between *Ex Machina* and Chris Cunningham's video for *All Is Full Of Love* by Björk, and many of the millions who saw it on YouTube — us included — wished Quantic Dream would do something more with it. *Become Human* is that something.

In this version of *Detroit* the city's car industry has been replaced by the humanoid robot industry. It's now Android City, not Motor City, and not everyone is happy about this robotic development.

Kara's still on the loose, albeit with a different haircut, and while her 'bot brethren ride in separate compartments on the train and seem to be treated like second-class citizens, she walks free like her flesh and blood makers.

That's about all we know for now and what happens from there is unclear, but storytelling is Quantic Dream's thing, so you can expect a smartly told tale with plenty of hand-wringing as you make decisions that could dramatically affect how events unfold later on.



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NEWS FROM PARIS GAMES WEEK

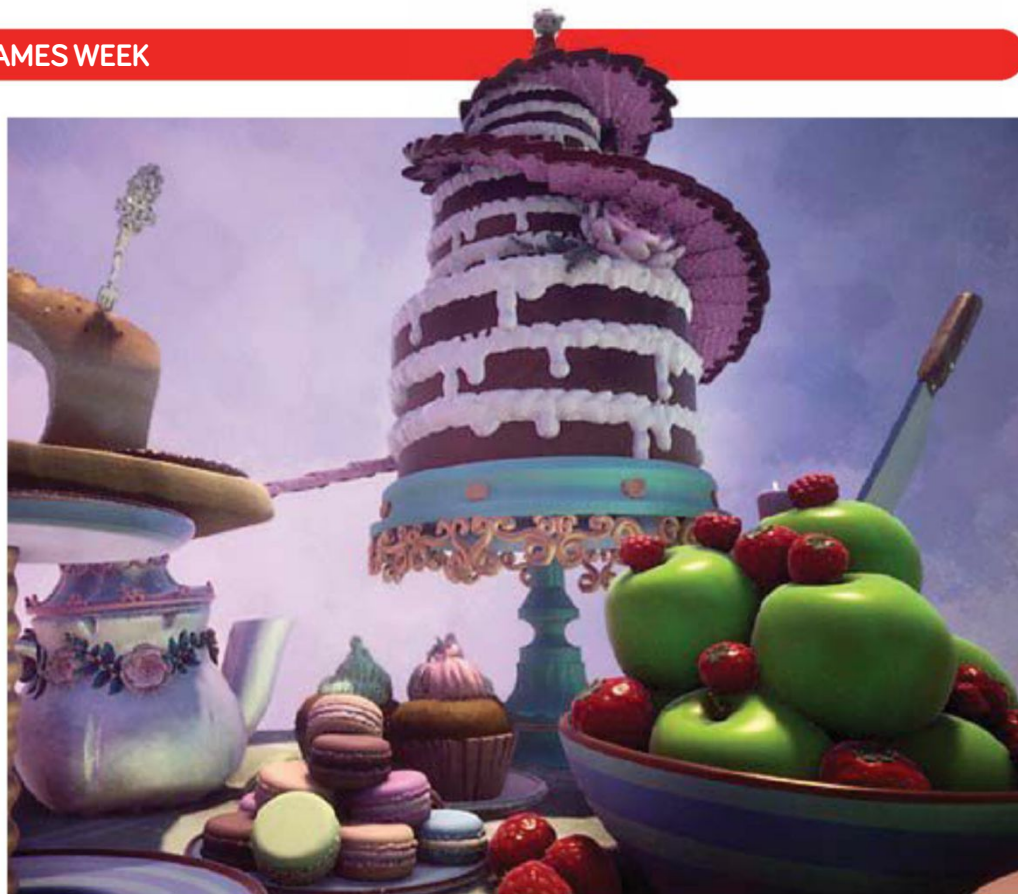
DREAMS

PS4

When the quirky kids behind *LittleBigPlanet* announced a new game at E3, we were all excited. Thing was, no-one could really work out what the game was about. Or even if it really was a game. Now we've seen *Dreams* in action, and our excitement is warranted.

Media Molecule will include pre-built levels and characters in a story-like experience, but *Dreams* is all about creation. You can take parts from anywhere and stretch and twist them to your own worlds or characters. Don't worry if you've got all the creative skill of a stunned cephalopod: your accidental Picassos are quite acceptable here.

And they needn't be stuck in the game – they can be exported and 3D-printed. Media Molecule's Alex Evans said they've experimented with 3D-scanning objects and adding them to the game too. Just imagine importing all of your old toys to your dreams...



GRAN TURISMO SPORT

PS4

Sony says it's not *GT7* but that doesn't mean *Sport* will be a half measure. In fact, the world governing body for motorsport, the FIA, will be recognising results from two of *GT Sport*'s online championships, so put in enough hours and McLaren might be on the phone. Well, they couldn't do much worse than they are already.



UNTIL DAWN: RUSH OF BLOOD

PS VR

Fresh from browning the trousers of PS4-ers across the globe, the makers of *Until Dawn* are prepping a virtual reality version for the launch of Sony's VR headset next year. It seems to be an on-rails shooter like you'd find in '90s arcades, but with the added fear of having your head stuck right inside that world.



WILD

PS4

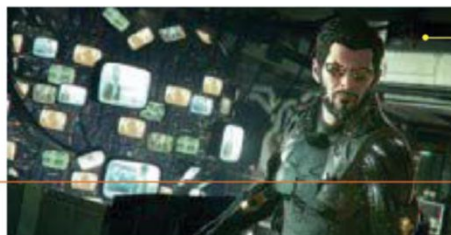
Fantastical forage-'em-up *Wild* is something of a Doctor Dolittle simulator, in which you track and befriend a host of creatures across a landscape designed to replicate northern Europe. You'll even get to inhabit their bodies by making offerings to the game's gods. Sounds weird, right? But it makes a change from another first-person shooter.



ROBINSON: THE JOURNEY

PS VR

Looking a little like *Portal* crossed with *Jurassic Park*, *Robinson* puts you in the shoes of a young boy who has found himself on a planet inhabited by dinosaurs, with a *Destiny*-esque floating robotic sphere as his only friend. Crytek (of *Crysis* fame) is making it for PlayStation VR so you can bet it'll be a visual feast.



INCOMING

FEBRUARY

● DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

MARCH

● TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

● HITMAN

MAY

● BATTLEBORN

● MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

JUNE

● NO MAN'S SKY

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In one ear ONKYO W800BT

Music, they say, be the food of love. It be also the way of not hearing damn-fool tripe other people be spouting, say we. And so, despite our 'travel light' mantra, we are prepared to extend a little bit of loadspace to these Onkyo W800BT earphones. Unlike most other lightweight Bluetooth noiseniks, they are, as you can see, entirely unjoined by cable or wire. Instead they connect wirelessly with a phone and with each other, protecting us from strangers' mouth-guff with a beaver-dam of intermingled music and physical isolation. Battery life be not great – they promise 12 hours yet ours lasted only six – but we be not hanging around.

US\$320 / onkyo-headphones.com

And in the other JABRA ECLIPSE

Given the density of city commuters these days (and we mean 'density' very much in both senses of the word), we like to hit the metropolis light and lithe, like a lanolin-slathered polecat. Packing nothing more than a phone and a creepy little business card holder, we duck and dive through the human traffic with Bullet Time rapidity and, on the rare occasions that we have to call ahead to explain a delay, we do it on Jabra's lightest ever Bluetooth headset. At 5.5g it weighs less than one of the tassels on our Italian loafers, and yet its battery can handle (an entirely unnecessary) ten hours of talk.

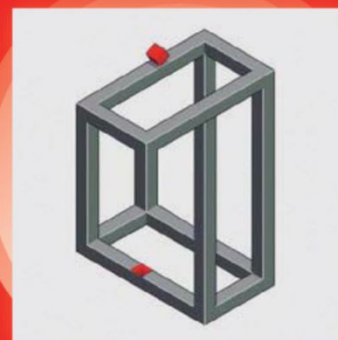
US\$130 / jabra.com

DROP EVERYTHING AND DOWNLOAD...

hocus. US\$0.99 / iOS

Getting on for two years have passed since we suddenly became obsessed by the isometric emotional experience that was *Monument Valley*. People who disliked it generally turned their noses up because they said it was too simple. They are not going to like *hocus.*, which takes the baffling 2D/3D puzzle element and focuses entirely on it. Guiding your featureless cube along

the pathways is done by swiping. There's no shape rotation, no enemies, no push buttons: just you and the cube and all the time in the world to figure out how to get it to the exit. Sounds boring? Banal? Mind-numbing, even? Just wait 'til it gets its hooks in you. At just 99c for 50 levels, you're looking at one hell of a lot of bang – not to mention head-banging frustration – for your buck.





YOUR MONTH DEC

Presents aren't the only thing this month has going for it...



03

XDUBAI FLYBOARD WORLD CUP

Skydive Dubai
The second annual strap-on-a-water-sputtering-foot-jetpack-and-dart-about-the-ocean competition is back and we're excited to watch this collection of bonkers backflippers get to work. Trust us, what they do is a lot harder than it looks, we've tried.



07

ABOVE AND BEYOND PRESENTED BY BOEING

Children's City, Dubai
A partnership between Boeing and Nasa, this virtual trip to Mars lets you experience what it's like to fly in a 360 degree view projection of Earth. Cheaper than building your own space shuttle that's for sure.



07

FEAR THE WALKING DEAD

DVD, Blu-ray
The Walking Dead neatly launched into its narrative with the zombies already very much a thing in North America. FTWD rewinds to the start of the outbreak. New gang, new dramas!



11

BRICK 2015

ExCeL, London
The What's On list for this Lego fan fest reads like the result of a money-no-object pre-event brainstorm. And yet it's all real, including movie scene reconstructions, giant brick pits and Guinness World Record attempts. If you can get to the UK for it, we highly recommend it.



18

THE ART OF STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Presuming you pre-booked to see the new film on its launch day of the 17th, you won't get any spoilers from this book of sketches, storyboards, blueprints and interviews dropping on your doorstep the next morning.



21

THE PEANUTS MOVIE

The voice cast for this 3D computer animated film is all children, although Woodstock and Snoopy's sound effects are from the Charlie Brown archives. With members of the Schulz family doing the writing, this could be pretty good.



WIN! A PAIR OF SENNHEISER MOMENTUM HEADPHONES

The Momentum line is already internationally renowned for producing some of the classiest cans known to ear-kind. Never one to rest on its laurels, Sennheiser has decided to up the stakes on an already eye-catching design by combining brushed stainless steel and high quality leather with proprietary 18ohm Neodym transducers. This is so that you can go about the business of grooving to your music in public at the highest possible quality just like all those aspirational TV ads would lead you to believe your life should be like.

People making fun of your sweet sidewalk dance moves? No problem, the new Momentum's over-ear design offers a comfortable seal that helps block out all the haters. And should you receive a call from someone who actually appreciates your quest to redefine the world of interpretive dance, you can answer them without ever having to take your smartphone out of your pocket thanks to the handy integrated in-line remote. So let's recap: Stylish design? Check. Crystal clear audio reproduction? Check. Dance-like-no-one-is-watching potential? Double check. Spiritual fulfillment? Probably that too. We've got a pair to give away, so you better get to entering, you crazy diamond.

HOW TO ENTER

For a chance to win a pair of Sennheiser Momentum headphones go to stuff.tv/me/win and answer this simple question:

WHAT PROPRIETY TECH DO THE MOMENTUM'S INCLUDE TO HELP MAKE YOUR MUSIC SOUND AWESOME?

- A 18 ohm Neodym transducers
- B A Flux Capacitor
- C Pizza

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*Offer is available only in UAE at participating retailers for a limited time only.



f /xboxgulf

t /xboxgulf

i /xboxgulf

Words Mike Priest
Photography & Coordination Farooq Salik
Art Direction Clarkwin Cruz
Stylist Cherith Nicholl
Hair & Makeup Ron Bajacan
Model Laura Badura

GIFTS FOR GEEKS

APPLE FAN P30

COUNTRY HOPPER P41

BIG TECH KID P38

CANS FANS P42

ANDROID ADDICT P34

AUDIOPHILE P33

PHOTO NERD P28

GAMER P44

FITNESS FREAK P36

WE HAVE

« STRAP IN AND PREPARE TO ENTER THE PRESENTSPHERE »

GIFT-OFF

PHOTO NERD



THE MAGIC WAND OF LIGHT PAINTING

Pixelstick

Do you know a snapper who loves the streaky lights of a long-exposure shot? If so, don't be deceived by the Pixelstick's name – this is no selfie-enabling tat. It's a light-painting tool capable of conjuring up the most incredible images. Just stick in an SD card loaded with the image of your choice and the Pixelstick's 200 RGB LEDs will display it. Then wave it around, take a long exposure and prepare to be wowed.

US\$350 / thepixelstick.com



SanDisk Ultra 200GB microSD

It's not the sexiest of gifts, but furnish your snap-happy loved one with 200GB of storage and they'll be yours forever. It can be slotted into your Android phone or tablet, plus it comes with an adaptor for a proper camera. It's class 10 certified, so ideal for shooting full HD video.

US\$135 / sandisk.com



Polaroid Snap Instant Camera

Photography in 2015: 1) Take pics on your 20MP phone; 2) share them via Twittbookgram; 3) never look at them again. Polaroid wants to change all that. Take a picture with its 10MP cam and its built-in Zero Ink printer will instantly produce a real, physical 2x3in print.

US\$100 / polaroid.com



Xsories Bendy

A tripod is an essential tool for any photographer, and the flexible mini tripod that is the Xsories Bendy is available in three sizes (mini for phones, standard for compact cams, big for DSLRs) Its twisty turny legs can be wrapped around anything to give you a stable shooting base.

from US\$10 / xsories.com

Cardigan Alice & Olivia @ Harvey Nichols



Fujifilm X-A2

This is the first camera in Fujifilm's X Series to offer a tilting screen along with its 16.3MP APS-C sensor. You can flip the LCD 175 degrees and use the built-in Eye Detection AF, which automatically focuses on your peepers, to take the perfect selfie.

US\$500 / fujifilm.com



APPLE FAN



USE IT WITH... **PAPER (Efree, iOS)**
This sketching app has added diagram tools and annotations to its brushes and pens.

ONE

Mophie H2PRO

We all have that one person in our lives that can't keep from destroying their iPhone. Not only will the H2PRO spare their poor blower from accidental breakage and toilet bowl droppage with its military grade toughness and IP68 waterproofing, they'll also get a full extra battery charge out of it too.

US\$140 / mophie.com

TWO

Instant Lab Universal

It's not a true Throwback Thursday until everyone gets their smartphone snaps printed out on Polaroid instant film. This dinky darkroom will do just that, spitting out a real souvenir when you put your phone face-down in its cradle.

US\$250 / shop.the-impossible-project.com

THREE

Lensbaby Creative Mobile Kit

Photography apps like VSCO Cam are so good they almost make snapping too easy, but there are some places their filters can't go. This pack of two lenses plus a kickstand and mount can help create anything from motion-blurred sports shots to kaleidoscopic landscapes.

US\$90 / wexphoto-graphic.com

FOUR

Shure MV88

If your friend is an avid bootlegger of live concerts or someone who needs to incessantly put their innermost thoughts down on (digital) tape, this stereo condensor microphone is just the ticket. It plugs directly into their iThing's Lightning connector and adjusts on a 90 degree hinge.

US\$150 / shure.com

FIVE

iPad Pro

Rocking a 12.9in screen with an eye-blistering resolution of 2732x2048 (264ppi), you'd be forgiven for using Apple's newest slab just to watch HD cat videos all day. But thanks to an optional Pencil, Keyboard Case and iOS 9 multitasking chops its actually a productivity powerhouse.

from US\$800 / apple.com

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ONE**Ministry of Sound Audio S Plus**

A Bluetooth speaker from the legendary nightclub that's designed to go loud without compromising on the quality of your beats. You can even wirelessly connect two for stereo sound, and there's a pair of tickets to the MoS mothership for next time you're in London town.

US\$200 / ministryofsound.com

TWO**LG Music Flow HS7**

This 4.1 channel, 360 watt soundbar and subwoofer combo is not only designed to make your movies sound pristine, but it also has Google Cast built-in so you can beam your favourite tunes from any compatible device (be it smartphone, tablet or PC) directly to it, completely hassle-free.

US\$540 / lg.com

THREE**Rega RP8**

Rega's more obsessed with shedding pounds than Weight Watchers. It spent three years developing the polyolefin foam that forms the RP8's plinth making it super-light and super strong. Not only does it look fantastic it also make any wax spun on it sound out of this world.

US\$3000 / rega.co.uk

FOUR**Sonos Play:5**

Our favourite multi room speaker has a swish new colour scheme and subtle changes to its design. But that's not all, every Play:5 now comes with Trueplay, which automatically tunes the speaker via your smartphone after emitting a special tone for an enhanced experience.

US\$500 / sonos.com

FIVE**Teenage Engineering Pocket Synths**

There's a lead synth, a bass synth and a drum machine. The bassone is the best, because it's got a picture of a submarine on it, but they all offer the same unique combo of dinky lo-fi looks - like the flimsiest nineties calculator - and wild, glitchy, highly tweakable sounds.

US\$60 / teenageengineering.com

**AUDIOPHILE**

USE IT WITH...

LG MUSIC FLOW H4

LG's Music Flow gives you multiroom audio - just add two of these portable 20-watt speakers to your H7 for immersive 5.1 surround sound.

US\$270 / lg.com

Asus ZenWatch 2

The Asus Zenwatch 2 comes in 49mm and 45mm sizes, with its Gorilla Glass 3 glass cover keeping it scratchproof against even the clumsiest of watch wearers. Its also armed with a suite of apps such as a watch face designer and remote camera function to enhance the user experience beyond a standard Adroid Wear device.

from US\$190 / asus.com



Top Sandro

ANDROID ADDICT

Chromecast

Google's revamped video-streaming dongle still lets you use your phone as a remote for playing web content on your telly, but now it has an improved app, loads of new games and an audio-streaming brother that lets you do the same for playing music on your hi-fi. Simple and effective, the big G's newest streamer is a no-brainer pressie for anyone who can't help but bingewatch their TV shows.

US\$35 /
google.com/chromecast



USE IT WITH...
PLEX

If you have a NAS drive, use the Plex app on your phone to play music on your hi-fi or video on your telly.

US\$free / plex.tv

STREAM
MUSIC
AND VIDEO
EASILY



Sony Xperia Z5 Dual

Xperia handsets have always been the kings of classy, understated smartphone design. The Z5's frosted glass back lives up to that reputation whilst housing a 23MP camera and a punchy 5.2in 1080p display. The addition of a sideloaded fingerprint scanner is also a nice touch from Sony

US\$680 / sonymobile.com



WoodPuck Qi Charger

Few things that go by the description of 'puck' are as pleasing as useful as this. Crafted from the finest Mao Zhu bamboo (which is good, because it's very sustainable), this little disc will wirelessly charge any Qi-enabled device in a beautiful fusion of tech wizardry and mother nature.

US\$30 / amazon.com



Instacube

For genuinely Instagram-hooked Android fans, it's a drag having to take their phone out of their pocket to flick through celebs' snaps of what they had for lunch. Thankfully, this wireless photo-frame-style touchscreen lets you stream insta-pics onto a 'living canvas' on your wall, desk or shelf.

US\$150 / hashtagcube.com

FITNESS FREAK



ONE

Zepp Tennis Kit

Like a miniature Ivan Lendl (pity it can't replicate his withering glare), this accessory coaches players by capturing racquet speed, power and accuracy, before crunching the data into a 3D animation that can be viewed instantly in its iOS and Android phone app.

US\$130 / zepp.com

TWO

Sony Smart B-Trainer

If you can't decide between a GPS watch, a fitness band or heart-rate tracking headphones for your beloved runner, this combines all three. They also get pace-matched music, 16GB of onboard tunes and a 10-hour battery life, which means they won't have to take their phone running.

US\$250 / sony.com

THREE

Adidas Ultra Boost

These trainers' styrofoam-like cushioning is regarded by runners of all levels as one of the most comfortable rides around, while their Primeknit upper expands with your foot on long runs. Few trainers are better for anything from middle-distance to marathon training.

US\$220 / adidas.com

FOUR

Sol Republic Relays Sport

It's hard enough finding the right pair of running headphones for your own ears, let alone someone else's. The sweat-proof Relays are a safe bet thanks to an adaptable outer ring that moulds to the shape of your ear. They have in-line mic control for important mid-run call pickup.

US\$55 / solrepublic.com

FIVE

Garmin Vivoactive

The Jessica Ennis of GPS watches, this all-rounder mixes tracking for various sports with notifications from your phone. It doesn't have heart-rate monitoring built in, but sleep analysis and compatibility with Garmin's highly motivating Connect platform make it a tempting piece of kit.

US\$250 / garmin.com



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from US\$30 entry / dubaimarathon.org

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BIG TECH KID



Dell XPS 13

Sure, laptops can be used for making spreadsheets (groan), but Dell's compact Ultrabook has the potential for so much more by squeezing a gorgeous 13.3in touchscreen into a cozy 11in frame. Whether it's wasting away hours on the latest online games or editing the family summer holiday video footage, this versatile lappy is the ultimate buy for that big kid in your life.

from **US\$800** / dell.com



USE IT WITH...

**Minecraft
Gameband**

Carry your entire brick-built world on your wrist and boot it up on any PC you like. Blocky brilliance at its finest.

US\$80 / gameband.com

UNLEASH
YOUR INNER
NERD



Osmo

The Osmo platform will keep kids enthralled for hours, and learning as they go. Slot your iPad into the stand and slip the Reflector over its camera and you've got an interactive puzzle peripheral. As they play, the app intelligently recognises their shapes, letters, numbers and drawings.

from **US\$80** / playosmo.com



Anki Overdrive

Scalextric for your smartphone, Anki is a modular track of straights and right angles, around which robotic supercars tear in battle or race mode. Compatible with iOS and Android, it lets up to four players control the speed and lane choice, while their cars handle the corners.

from **US\$150** / anki.com



Sphero BB-8

This gyroscopic mini-droid is straight out of your sci-fi dreams. No, not the one with Princess Leia. Like a master of the Force, you can control the BB-8 remotely via an app, or it can be left to explore the living room in all its gliding glory, as you record virtual holographics to Obi-Wan (or Mum).

US\$150 / store.sphero.com

3DRobotics Solo

In the future, flying robots will deliver every present you buy. For now, this drone is more about helping you shoot awesome aerial footage. Designed specifically with GoPro's excellent action camera range in mind, it's a cinch to zip about the skies thanks to assisted guidance tech courtesy of twin on-board 1GHz computers. You'll be scoring professional-grade shots of your weekend BBQ in no time flat.

US\$1360 / 3drobotics.com



Boots: Christian Louboutin



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It also has longer battery life, easier mounting, & works without cables.

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Distributed by Lionfish General Trading - www.lionf.com

COUNTRY HOPPER



ONE

Lenovo Yoga Tab 3 Pro

This Android slab from Lenovo has a built-in projector and a flip-out stand making it quite unlike anything else out there. Yes it's a bit mad, but that makes it equally at home playing back your favourite shows in a cramped airplane seat or projecting them in massive 70in glory on your hotel room wall.

US\$500 / lenovo.com

TWO

Monster Villain

The perfect present for the adventure traveller, this action camera can record Full HD 1080p videos at 30fps and is waterproof up to 30m. It even comes with a floatable housing enclosure that means in the event of a major surfing wipe-out it'll be as ready as you are to get back on the board.

US\$185 / monsterproducts.com

THREE

Asus ZenBook UX305

Jet-setting around the globe with a bulky laptop is no one's idea of a good time, which is why this super-slim ultrabook from Asus makes for an excellent travel buddy. It weighs in at a mere 1.2kg, is slimmer than a Macbook Air and thanks to Intel's new Core M CPU will be whisper quite during flights.

from US\$820 / asus.com

FOUR

Wondercube

Ask yourself what you think it's possible to fit into the space of a single cubic inch. A phone stand? A battery booster? A memory card reader? How about a torch? Well, the Wondercube packs all of these things and more into the same space as a your dinkiest keyring.

US\$55 / thewondercube.com

FIVE

Xoo Charging Belt

Travel tech doesn't come much more stealthy than a belt with a built-in phone charger. Sure, you might have to explain it to airport security (it complies with all airline regulations), but imagine the smug feeling when your tablet starts running out of juice midway through *Birdman*.

US\$250 / xoo.co



USE IT WITH...

SPACEPAK CLOTHES COMPRESSION UNIT

Get a bonus luggage upgrade with these air-vent-equipped packing aids, which compress to leave more room for gadgets.

US\$50 / bearandbear.com



1



2



3



4



5

CANS FANS



USE IT WITH... **TIDAL HI-FI (US\$120 / tidal.com)**
If their golden ears demand lossless FLAC quality, this upfront Tidal deal is spot on.

ONE

Monster ROC Sport Black Platinum

Pairing big, brash headphones with even bigger, brashier sports stars seems to be in vogue. So, if there's someone in your life who is a massive fan of Cristiano Ronaldo then you're liable to make their year with these powerful and stylishly designed pair of statement over-ears.

US\$350 / monsterproducts.com

TWO

Sennheiser Momentum Wireless

The gift for the person you truly love, these cans combine the sexy looks of the Momentum range with tech-tastic, audiophile-pleasing aptX Bluetooth. That means you look good, your music sounds better and you're not tethered to your phone.

US\$500 / sennheiser.com

THREE

Sol Republic Master Track Air

These on-ears are practically indestructible – and while tough kit both rarely looks and sounds good, you'll be pleased to hear that the Master Tracks deliver on both fronts, with punchy sound and a pleasing luxurious finish that comes in a range of hipper-than-thou colours.

US\$220 / solrepublic.com

FOUR

B&O BeoPlay H2

Headphones are now inescapably objects of fashion. They say things about their wearers, such as 'I admire the style of the superstar DJ' or 'I'm refined and tasteful in a Danish way'. If the latter applies to you, you'll love the look of these. More importantly, these on-ears sound superb.

US\$260 / beoplay.com

FIVE

Skullcandy Grind

If you know someone who bangs on about kickflips, can-cans or toe rolls, these are the headphones for them: tough enough to handle a tour of the skate park, available in enough colours to match the most lurid of decks, and with controls on the cups for changing tracks mid-ride. As the kids say, granly.

US\$60 / skullcandy.com

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All (21) shortlisted contestants will win a new Motiv MV51 Microphone. Five winners will get Shure Products worth 1000 € and a Vocal Masterclass at ACM including a professional recording session at Metropolis Studios in London.

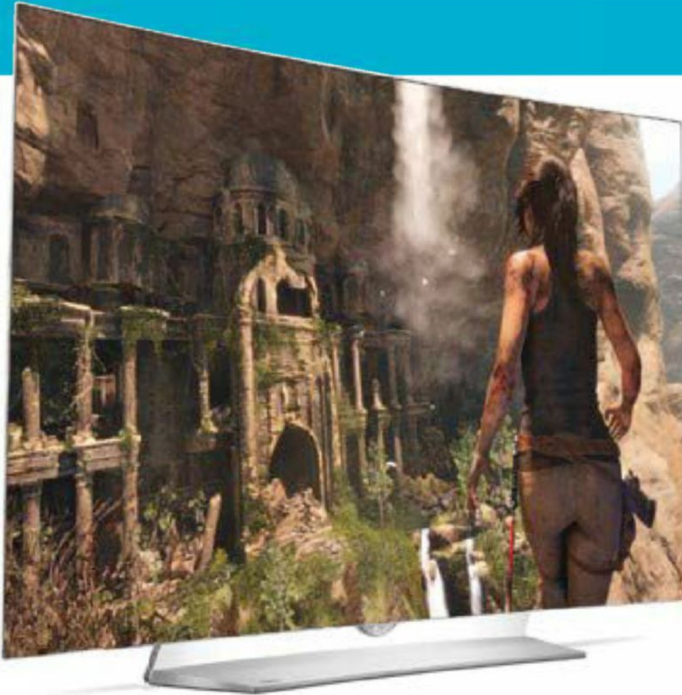


Sony PlayStation 4

2016 is shaping up to be a bumper year for the PlayStation 4 with a slew of exclusive titles hitting the system. What better time than the holiday season to get in on the ground floor of this revolutionary console – there are plenty of games to play already and a wealth of online content via the PSN Network. **US\$400 / playstation.com**



GAMER



LG 55EG920

We love LG's 4K OLED tellys, but the top-of-the-line models cost far more than we're willing to spend on anyone. This entry-level 55-inch still isn't cheap but if you truly want to make a gamer happy, this puppy will have their favourite titles looking pristine and is a surefire way to have them buying you lunch for the next 12 months.

US\$4100 / lg.com

ALTERNATIVELY...

LG 55EG910

Can't afford a 4K set? No probs, this OLED beauty still looks fantastic and will score you major brownie points for less cash up front.

US\$2200 / lg.com



Turtle Beach Ear Force PX24

These gaming cans are a safe choice for gamers that split their time between the PS4, Xbox One, and their lovingly-crafted PC rig. Compatible with all three platforms, the PX24s also have a built-in battery-powered amplifier with a bass boost option for booming explosions.

US\$80 / turtlebeach.com



Xbox One Elite Controller

If your game-mad mate fancies themselves as a proper pro player, there's no better prize than this Elite pad for their Xbox. Designed with the world's best zombie-slayers in mind, it's a refined palm-filler with interchangeable thumbsticks, D-pads and paddles for the ultimate custom gaming setup.

US\$150 / xbox.com



MSI GE72 60F Apache Pro

The PC gaming master race knows what's up, and so will the lucky recipient of this portable powerhouse. Rocking a 17.3in Full HD screen, NVIDIA GTX 960M graphics and the latest 6th gen Intel Core i7 processor, MSI has taken great pains to make sure this machine absolutely crushes the latest titles out there.

US\$900 / website.com



Ok, that's enough looking at presents for everyone else. We think you deserve something nice for yourself. Just go to:

STUFF.TV/ME/WIN

...and you can enter into the running to win a **Halo 5: Guardians Limited Collector's Edition** for Xbox One which includes additional content for the game and a commemorative statue designed by 343 Industries. Good luck!



Alienware recommends Windows.

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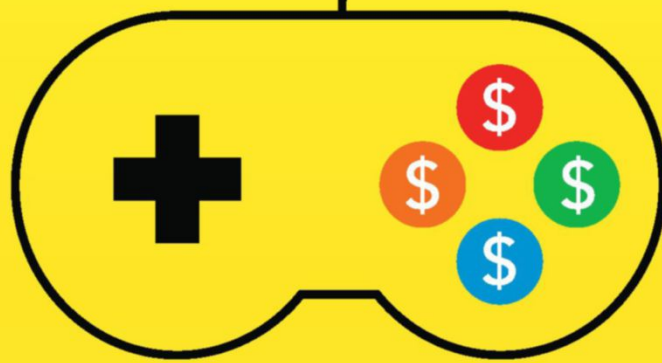
- Intel® Core™ i7-4710HQ Processor
- Windows® 8.1 PRO
- 16GB RAM
- 256GB SSD + 1TB 5400rpm
- 4GB NVIDIA GTX 980M GDDR5 Graphics
- 17.3" FHD
- 1 year next business day on-site warranty

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GET RICH PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

Gaming is the world's fastest-growing spectator sport, and the prize money is rising with it. We go inside an eSports team to find out what it takes to be a pro

[Words Guy Cocker Photography Adela Szajder]

For many gamers, the idea of watching someone else play is a little too close to the hours we spent being frustrated to tears by a console-hogging brother. But the new age of eSports is making this idea as dated as dusty game cartridges. It's propelling computer games up towards the previously unimaginable status of being the world's biggest spectator sport.

Don't believe us? Consider the fact that more people tuned into the *League Of Legends* World Championship final on Twitch.tv than the number of strawberry-scoffing tennis fans who watched the 2015 Wimbledon final on the BBC... or the

reality that there are now 134 million eSports viewers worldwide.

And it's not just audiences that are exploding like a well-aimed plasma grenade. In April, Jordan Spieth took home \$1.8m for winning The Masters golf tournament, one of traditional sport's most prestigious trophies. Four months later, a five-man team called Evil Geniuses picked up a cheque for US\$6.6m, equivalent to \$1.3m each, at *DOTA 2*'s 'The International' Championship. And all without having to use a stick to hit a ball out of a sandpit.

DREAM SPIRIT

With so many people watching and so much money up for grabs, we headed to one of the few UK-based ►

A BRIEF HISTORY OF eSPORTS

Milestones on the path to US\$6 million winner's cheques

1980



Space Invaders Championship

The first ever large-scale gaming competition. 10,000 people from across the US competed for the Asteroids cocktail table prize.

2000



World Cyber Games

South Korea created the gaming equivalent of the Olympics. It had everything: the big arena, lavish opening ceremony and medals.

2004



Major League Gaming National Championships

The first major competition to focus on console games. It now includes PC titles.

2011



Twitch

This Amazon-owned site allows people to watch tournaments and is ranked fourth for peak internet traffic in the US.

2013



Pro gamers become 'athletes'

Canadian player Danny 'Shiphur' Le made history by gaining a US P-1A visa, for 'Internationally Recognized Athletes'.

eSports tournaments to find out what all the fuss is about. DreamHack is a Swedish eSports organisation that is massively popular in its home country – over there, the finals are broadcast on SVT1, Sweden's equivalent of BBC One. Its first UK event was held at the Copper Box Arena in London's Olympic Park, and centred around Valve's *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, a team-based PC shooter played by an average of over 600,000 people a day. On offer to those who enter: a prize fund of \$40,000, with \$20,000 awarded to the winning team. Not bad for a weekend's work.

One team hoping to win the top prize was Team Dignitas, one of the ten best *Counter-Strike* outfits in the world. The team started out ten years ago when two *Battlefield 1942* teams merged together, and it now has a total of 47 players competing in nearly all the major eSports games and events. They're managed by Michael 'Odee' O'Dell, a Brit who was once a professional gamer himself. He's in charge of pretty much everything – getting the team from tournament to tournament, training them in between events, even sending out the yellow and black Team Dignitas merchandise that fans can buy online. And now he's helping us shadow the players as they battle their way through the four teams that stand between them and the \$20,000 prize.

KIT AND MISS

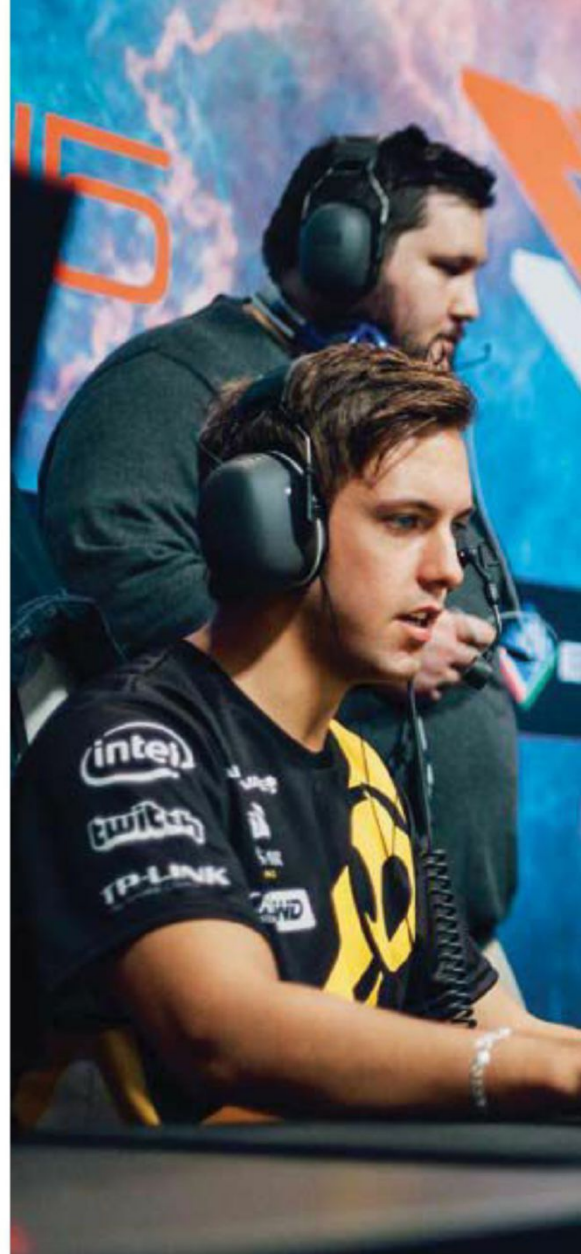
When we first meet Team Dignitas, they're half an hour away from their first-round battle against the Australian team Renegades. They're exactly as you'd imagine a team of young professional gamers: quiet and slightly awkward, but also polite and disarmingly honest. "No flame, but there are better monitors than the ones we're using here," complains Markus Kjaerbye, the youngest member of the team, as if he's firing out an angry Reddit post. He's spent 30 minutes shooting bots on the DreamHack monitors provided by EIZO, but he's used to practising ten hours a day on team sponsor Iiyama's screens. In eSports competitions, the computers and monitors are provided by the organisers to make things fair, but you can understand Kjaerbye's frustration – it's like making Lionel Messi swap the Adidas boots he trains in for a pair of flip-flops.

Despite their complaints, Team Dignitas go on to win two out of their three first-day games, ensuring passage into the semi-finals on the second day. Watching them live, it doesn't take long before we're being drawn into the thrill of it all – unconsciously slapping our foreheads when someone misses, or applauding the perfect headshot. Team Dignitas, meanwhile, appear completely emotionless – their intense concentration broken only by the occasional fist-bump from team captain Mathias Lauridsen after a victorious round.

THAT WAS LIQUID SNIPING!

It helps that the production standards of events like DreamHack are as good as anything you'd see on TV. Games like *Counter-Strike* have evolved to allow broadcasters access to instant replays and tactical diagrams – things you'd see if you were watching football on Sky Sports. But the real stars

"**COUNTER-STRIKE** WILL BE ON TV IN 2016"



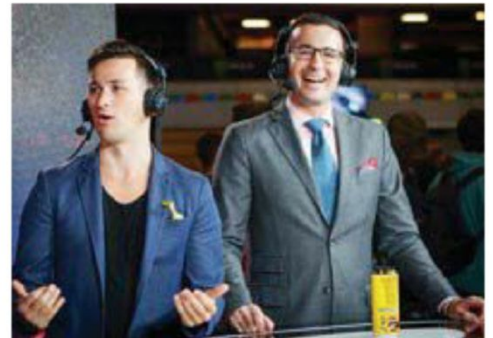
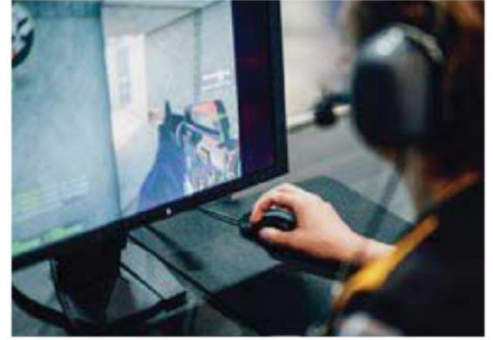
are the commentators, who talk at about 250 words a minute about every element of the game, offering a level of insight that's lacking from much of the traditional sports punditry on TV. In fact, it's endearing how little concession they make to newbies. Listening to them is like watching your first episode of *The Wire* – you probably won't understand all the words they're using, but you kind of just absorb it anyway.

One of these commentators is Richard Lewis, a journalist who fell into commentating through an early love of eSports. Lewis believes that eSports is on the cusp of a major sea change; one that will see huge sponsors replacing PC component manufacturers and mainstream broadcasters showing events instead of Twitch. "What I'm worried about is big TV stations coming in and dictating to us how things need to be done," he says. "I think *Counter-Strike* will be on mainstream TV in early 2016. In a couple of years we will get pushed out by the mainstream guys."

In many ways, what Lewis is talking about is already happening: Team Dignitas is signed to sports agency IMG, which also manages the careers of Novak Djokovic and the Williams sisters.

LOSING ALL DOPE

The need to become legitimate to a mainstream audience is eSports' biggest challenge, particularly ►



SAFE AS MOUSES... THE TEAM DIGNITAS GAMING ARSENAL

THE HEADSET



Corsair H1500

Communication is vital for pro gamers, so a well-made headset with a good boom mic is an absolute must.

The H1500 also offers 7.1 Dolby Surround sound processing, meaning players can hear the precise direction of gunfire and grenade drops.

US\$80 / corsair.com

THE MOUSE



Corsair Sabre Team Dignitas Edition

The team has its own mouse: you can change the 8200dpi laser sensor to be more or less sensitive and there are tweakable RGB lighting zones, eight buttons with Omron switches and a 1000Hz USB refresh rate.

US\$55 / corsair.com

THE KEYBOARD



Corsair K70

Pro gamers swear by mechanical keyboards, as the keys are smooth for easy double and triple taps, and they're durable as hell. Cherry MX Red switches are considered the best, and Corsair has created contoured and textured WASD and 1-6 keys.

US\$120 / corsair.com

THE SCREEN



Iiyama GB2488HSU-B1

This monitor is tailor-made for pro eSports players. The most important feature is response time — only 1ms, so there's basically no delay in the game and what the player sees. It's also an incredibly versatile monitor, with DisplayPort, DVI and HDMI inputs.

US\$180 / iiyama.com



as that audience is fragmented across different games, events and locations. The lack of a FIFA-like world governing body is probably a good thing given football's allegations of mysterious brown paper envelopes, but it also means there aren't universal checks in place to prevent cheating, match fixing, and more recently, doping allegations.

CS:GO player Kory 'Semphis' Friesen went on record recently saying that Adderall use was rife among professional players entering major competitions. A psychostimulant usually prescribed to treat ADHD, Adderall can be abused by people who want to concentrate for long periods of time – which perfectly describes pro gamers.

Odeed plays down the effectiveness of these stimulants, although he says he welcomes the idea of random drug testing in eSports. "I'm sure doping

goes on but I've not seen it, and I don't want to," he says. "That said, I've always wanted random drug tests. I want the arena to be fair for everyone."

So far, only the Electronic Sports League has laid out a testing policy – it will run random saliva tests at its competitions, with penalties ranging from deductions to prize money and tournament points, to disqualification and up to a two-year ban.

TOUGH AT THE TOP

While playing *Counter-Strike* for a living sounds fun, the reality is that the number of professional spots available is about as limited as Formula One driver seats. There are 16 full-time professional *Counter-Strike* teams – with five players per team, that means there are roughly 80 people in the world who can call playing it a job. Compare that with how many professional footballers there are in England and Wales alone – roughly 4500 – and you can see how rare professional gaming jobs are.

It's also a classic catch-22 situation: if you want to compete at the top level, you need to be able to quit your job to practise, but you can't quit your job unless you're being paid by a professional outfit like Team Dignitas. LGB Female is one of the few eSports teams made up of women, but they all have full-time jobs or university studies as well. "We're working ▶

IT'S NOT ALL COUNTER-STRIKE...

Not too handy with a sniper rifle? These elite games could make your eSports millions:

HEROES



League Of Legends

The most popular PC game in the world is free to play, but *LoL*'s incredible depth makes it perfect for eSports. Its Championship series runs all year round, and last year the final was watched by 27 million people.

BALLS



FIFA

Yes, all those weekends playing *FIFA* online might have been time well spent. *FIFA* isn't anywhere near as lucrative as the top titles, but you can still win the Interactive World Cup – last year's winner picked up \$20,000.

TROLLS



DOTA 2

The prize pools for the *Defense Of The Ancients* sequel are the biggest in eSports, funded by players buying in-game items. At 'The International' 2015 the total prize fund reached \$18.4m, the winner taking over a third of that.

GUNS



Call Of Duty

CoD has grown massively over the last couple of years to overtake *Halo* as the console eSports shooter of choice. Thanks to support from publisher Activision, the game is easy to broadcast and commentate on.

"I'M SURE
DOPING GOES
ON IN ESPORTS"



REPUBLIC OF
GAMERS

ASUS recommends Windows.



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HOW TO BECOME AN ESPORTS PRO

STEP ONE

Choose your weapon

Specialisation is key if you want to make money. The most popular games with the biggest prize pools are *DOTA 2*, *League Of Legends* and *StarCraft II*, but *FIFA* and *World Of Tanks* are less competitive yet still have tournaments with decent prizes.

STEP TWO

Watch the pros

Simply going on Twitch can be highly educational. "You learn by watching the pros," says Joakim Karlsson, an amateur *Super Smash Bros* player with big ambitions. "At big events, I might get to play against a pro and learn from them directly."

STEP THREE

Find some teammates

The big shooters and MOBA games are all played in teams. Head to eSports events to find people to pair up with. "There are 17 million people playing *Counter-Strike* alone, so you're bound to meet someone you click with," says LGB's Aurora Lyngdal.

STEP FOUR

Get livestreaming

Livestreaming can bring in revenue to help you expand, according to Tom 'Syndicate' Cassell, the first Twitch user to hit 1m subscribers. "It's easier to get noticed if you're livestreaming," he says, "and it's much better to do it live than put it on YouTube."

STEP FIVE

Get scouted

At some point you'll need to join a pro team, with coaching – a role Odeev performs with Team Dignitas. "One of our players kept missing shots," he says, "and we realised it was because he was breathing too fast. We taught him techniques to control it."



from 8am to 4pm and then you get home, have a quick dinner and you're playing from 6pm until late in the evening," says team captain Aurora Lyngdal. Inevitably, female players also have to face discrimination. "There's a mentality that girls can't play," admits Lyngdal. "Sometimes there's a feeling that the fans don't want us to be there. That mentality needs to go away and then a lot more women will come to the fore."

She thinks it will take another couple of years for LGB Female to be competing in the same tournaments as her male counterparts. But when they do break through, they'll at least be competing in the same tournaments as the boys, unlike most sports, which are segregated by gender.

THE HALO EFFECT

Sadly for Team Dignitas at DreamHack London, they fell short of winning the \$20,000 prize, being knocked out in the semi-finals by their arch rivals Team SoloMid. Their consolation prize was \$3000 – not a bad haul, but also not a lot to split between five people and a manager.

Still, the team left in high spirits – it had another tournament to enter with a much higher prize pool later in the week. Performing well in tournaments is also more about satisfying sponsors than winning

prizes – SuperData research estimates four fifths of all eSports revenue comes from sponsorship.

As we tried to talk to Team Dignitas about their defeat, we were interrupted by a group of fans wanting autographs. Mostly they had T-shirts or notepads to sign, sometimes it was a tattered mousemat, but the players dutifully signed whatever was handed to them, usually without a word uttered between either party. It was noticeable that one member in particular, the Bieber-esque Markus Kjaerbye, got plenty of attention from female fans.

We brought up the issue of groupies, but he was coy and tried to change the topic. Overhearing our conversation, his teammate Andreas Lindberg made a gesture suggesting the 17-year-old does OK with the ladies. Clearly, getting to play games all day is just one perk of being an eSports star.

"SOME FANS
THINK **GIRLS**
CAN'T PLAY"

Ultrabook-tacular

This MacBook Air rival comes with a bigger screen and slimmer body. So what's the catch?

US\$1600 / dell.com

■ The Dell XPS 13 is a more elegant, less fussy kind of Ultrabook. It's a great-looking laptop that hasn't gone cheap on its all-aluminum finish, but the focus here is on portability and practicality. Dell has squeezed a 13in display into what's effectively an 11in chassis.

■ The wrist-rests and keyboard surround have a soft-touch, rubberised finish, encouraging you to camp your mitts in a good typing position and click-clack away. And while there's less width to work with than on some 13.3in models, neither the keys nor the layout feels cramped. The trackpad is wide, smooth and very receptive to all those handy multi-touch shortcuts.

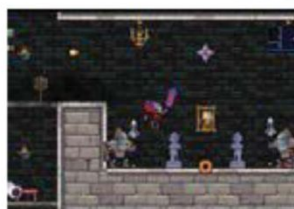
■ The touchscreen QHD+ panel doesn't go ludicrously bright – you still can't see it in bright sunlight – but the matt-surface screen helps cut down on reflections, colours are vibrant and blacks look deep and dark. Movies and games look great on the model we tested and it's easy on the eye when you're browsing the web or checking email.

■ This pint-sized powerhouse comes loaded with one of Intel's might 5th-generation Core i7 processors, perfect if you're doing a spot of 4K video editing or rendering your home-made Pixar knock-offs. With 8GB of RAM Windows 10 runs smoothly and apps punch in and out with a snap. You can multitask and open endless Browser tabs with impunity, and the Geekbench 3 scores of 2704 for single-core and 5024 for multi-core is exactly what we'd expect. You can easily crank over eight hours of light use thanks to a superb battery.



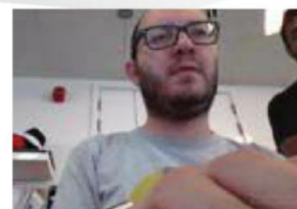
Tech specs

OS Windows 10
Screen 13.3in 3200x1800 QHD+ LCD
CPU Intel Core i7 5500U 2.4GHz
GPU Intel HD5500
RAM 8GB
Storage 256GB SSD
Connectivity 802.11ac, USB 3.0 (x2), Mini DisplayPort, SD
Dimensions 204x200x15mm, 1.27kg



GOT GAME?

Championship Manager? Fine. A little Diablo III? Maybe. Call of Duty: Black Ops 3 or Metal Gear Solid V? Forget it. If you fancy anything more than a little light gaming, you're out of luck.



WEIRD WEBCAMS

The weirdest thing is the position of the webcam. With no space above the screen it's shifted to the left-hand corner below it, giving Skype video callers a view of a massive-looking left-hand.

STUFF SAYS A nippy, highly usable ultrabook that packs mucho screen into not much space ★★★★★

It's smaller, thinner and lighter than the average 13-inch

Stuart Andrews

In many ways the XPS 13 is a cracking little laptop, packing maximum screen into minimum size without compromising on usability. It's no powerhouse, but it's speedy enough for everyday, has plenty of stamina and a gorgeous screen. If you're happy to pay a premium for a 13in laptop in an 11in chassis, this is the machine for you.

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FOR
KILLING
TIME

● Sage Solitaire

This one takes the card game that devoured a billion hours of your time on ancient PCs and rethinks it for mobile. The result is a sort of poker/solitaire mash-up. Further strategy comes from bonus points under each pile, hands requiring cards from two rows, trashes that replenish after successful moves, and a multiplier hand. All of which makes this simple card game hugely compelling. The sole IAP removes ads and provides extra modes.

Stuff says ★★★★★
US\$free / iOS

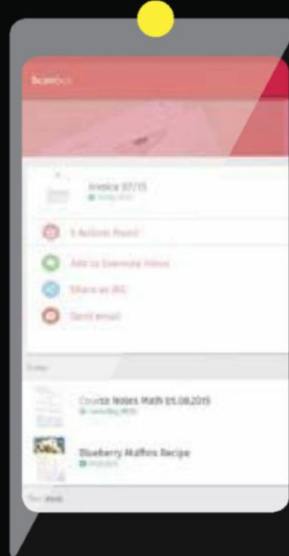


FOR
BACKING
UP DOCS

● Scanbot

Important documents have a tendency to get themselves lost, so a smartphone scanner is a wise investment. Scanbot's our current favourite. It does a great job scanning, edge-finding and auto-cropping. But buy the IAP and it gets really clever, helping you name files and anticipating where to save documents online. Even better: using character recognition, it picks out details — phone numbers, email addresses, URLs — and turns them into an actions menu for fast access.

Stuff says ★★★★★
US\$free (IAP) / Android, iOS

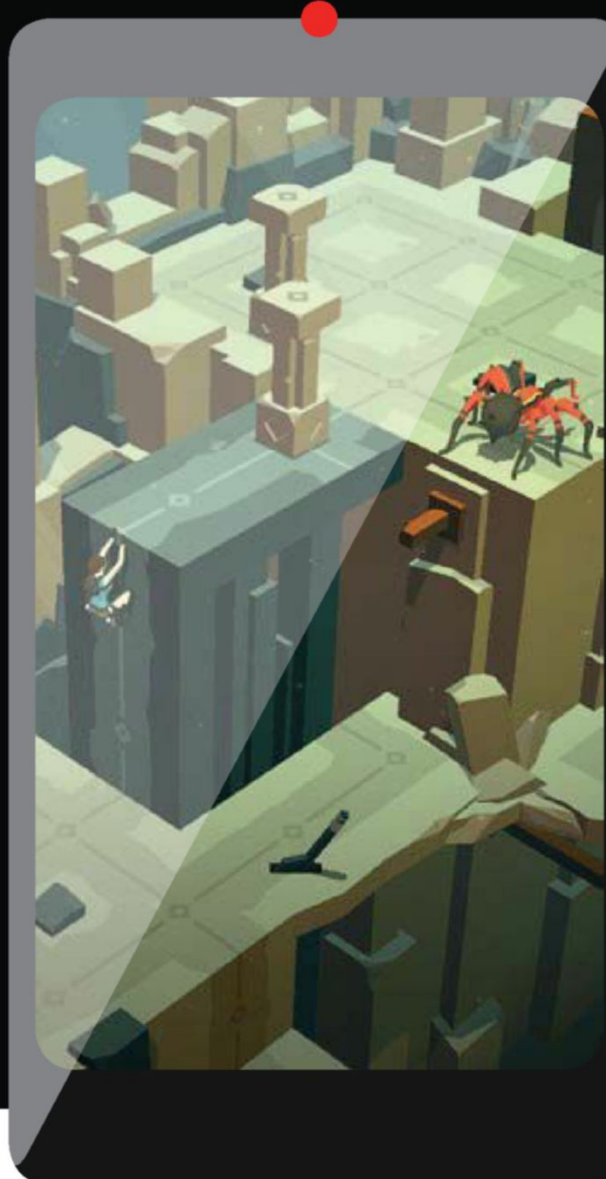


FOR
SUPER
DOODLING

● Paper

We suspect this update will annoy some people. Paper used to be a simple iPad version of expensive journals — all sleek and swish. Now it's an explosion of digital sticky notes, combining photos, sketches, checklists and drawn diagrams. If you've a minimalism fetish, have a strop in the corner; for the rest of us, this update — which now also brings Paper to iPhone — is fast and efficient, and full of great ideas: swipe to style, photo spotlights, and shape correction for scribbled charts.

Stuff says ★★★★★
US\$free / iOS



FOR
BRAINY
GAMING

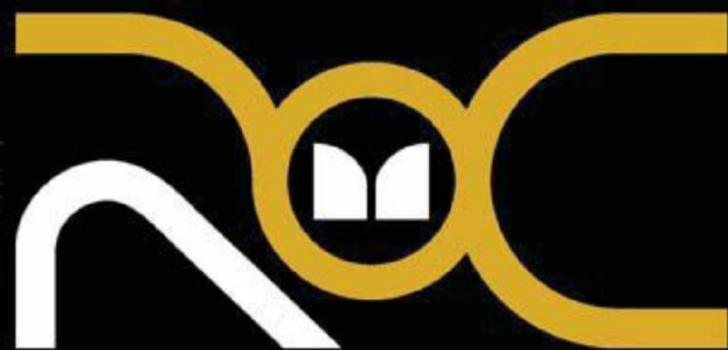
● Lara Croft Go

Our favourite tomb raider has fared poorly on mobile, but Go is an eye-opening combination of exploration and puzzling. Visually, the minimal geometric forms recall Monument Valley, as does the clever nature of the challenges. Lara appears to be raiding ruins constructed by wags with a penchant for blocky architecture, sliding platforms and death traps. The difficulty curve is slight, but the experience is so captivating that you'll love every moment.

Stuff says ★★★★★
US\$4.99 / Android, iOS



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L I V E L I F E L O U D



Fantastic thrifty fox

It's not often a new budget phone really grabs our attention, so what makes the Wileyfox Swift so special?

US\$135 / wileyfox.com

There's a whiff of OnePlus magic about the Wileyfox Swift. This new contender has put together a US\$135 phone that crams in the specs you might have to pay almost US\$250 for elsewhere. A little extra will buy the Moto G, which is better in parts, but this is still a red hot bargain.

The Swift is similar in style and feel to the Nexus 5 (the old one, not the new 5X). It's 9.4mm thick, so a bit less chunky than the Moto G. There's an embossed fox-head logo on the back, which peels off to reveal a removable battery and microSD slot, and the display is protected by Gorilla Glass 3.

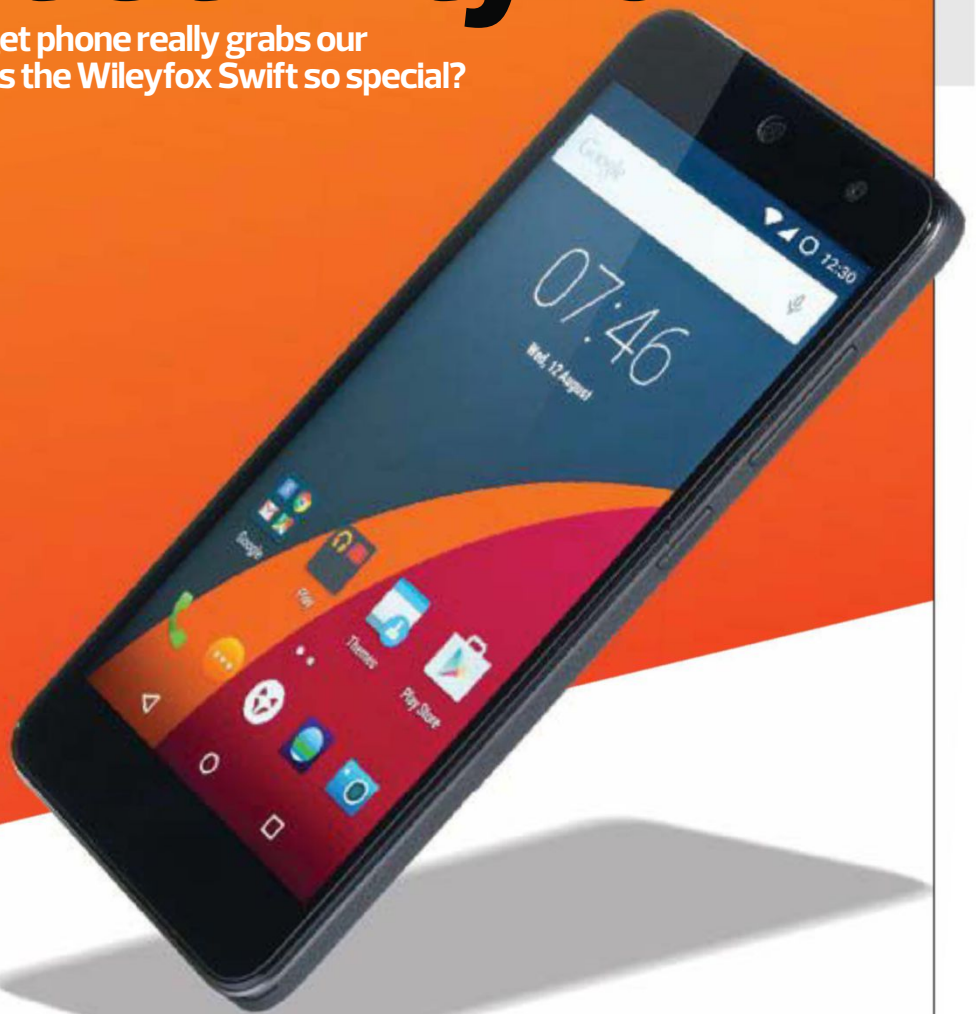
The display is insanely bright, which means it's great in direct sunlight but a bit over the top indoors. It has a 5in 720p screen, which is big enough for decent gaming and, while not 1080p, still pretty sharp.

The Swift runs Cyanogen 12.1, which means you can fiddle with the look and interface a lot more than with a regular Android phone. Its default settings are rather stylish however.

Performance is generally good too, with almost none of the lag we've seen recently in some cheaper Androids. This is mostly down to the 2GB RAM and Snapdragon 410 chip Wileyfox has packed into the Swift – a lot of power for a US\$135 phone.

Tech specs

Screen 5in 1280x720 **Processor** Quad-core Snapdragon 410 **OS** Cyanogen 12.1 **RAM** 2GB **Storage** 16GB (microSD to 32GB) **Cameras** 13MP rear, 5MP front **Dimensions** 141mmx71mmx9.4mm, 135g



Great fox-pic-tations

The camera's sensor and lens are streets ahead of other budget Androids, and in good lighting it's excellent. Low light and HDR modes are let down by clunky image processing, though.



It'll last a good Wile

You'll get a good day's use out of the Swift, and some spare change off a charge. It'll last for about nine hours of looped video, which is just a bit less than the latest Moto G.

STUFF SAYS This brand new mega-value fox is almost a match for the Moto G ★★★★★☆

Wileyfox has its priorities in order – I'm pretty impressed
Andrew Williams

You can try to build a brand by getting rappers to use your product while sauntering stylishly out of a club... but we prefer Wileyfox's way. With the Swift it has quietly introduced a tremendous bargain of a phone. It's not often a new budget phone brand arrives and really grabs our attention – making the price as low as possible rarely works – but the Wileyfox Swift is something special.

PC, PS4, Xbox One / starwars.ea.com

Star Wars Battlefront

If it's multiplayer mayhem you're after, spend this winter on the icy surface of Hoth (or above it)

The curse surrounding Star Wars games is notorious: either they're a fantastic offering of sci-fi brilliance or they go south, Jar Jar Binks-style. Few franchises have so consistently yo-yoed between the extremes. Thankfully, DICE's team multiplayer FPS looks sleeker than a Super Star Destroyer, and our laser-scarred experiences in the open beta have confirmed that the hype is well deserved.

Two game modes have been unlocked for the beta: Walker Assault and Drop Zone. The former places 40 players inside the first scenes of *The Empire Strikes Back* on the icy plains of Hoth. Twenty imperials protect a pair of AT-ATs as they make their way towards the shield generator. In order to stop them, the 20 rebels must activate uplink stations to call in Y-wing bombers. The front lines are constantly in motion, and it feels terrifyingly like a real invasion.

Power-ups littered across the map allow players to jump into an AT-ST, a TIE fighter or the monolithic AT-AT itself. Blaster

fire from the AT-AT slices through rebels, racking up a dozen kills in 30 seconds or less.

Airborne craft deal out massive amounts of damage, and are great for large targets but hopeless at zoning in on troopers themselves. Such an impressive armoury lends Vader's underlings an advantage, and this is why Walker Assault mode is so refreshing.

In our first 20 matches, there wasn't a single rebel victory. The ratio improved, but it's still pretty unfavourable. At first we were miffed, but the desire to succeed against a superior force is what makes it so tense. When your team does manage to wriggle into an advantageous position there's a rush of glee that your underdog could actually win. And an odd opposite applies to the Empire: you don't just want to win, you want to humiliate them.

At the time of writing, DICE has just acknowledged that the game mode is 'unbalanced'. Here's hoping they don't even it up too much.



The AT-ATs dominate the landscape and take plenty of hard graft to fell.



Playing as a rebel, the odds aren't in your favour, but blaster turrets help.

STUFF SAYS If Drop Zone and Walker Assault are anything to go by, we're in for a treat ★★★★★

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MAKING iOS APPS

Ready to make that must-download you've been thinking about for three years? Michael Simmons, founder of award-winning app Fantastical 2, will help you get started

THE BASICS

■ **Go analogue.** A pencil, paper and your imagination are the best combination for brainstorming ideas. There are also great tools such as Prott (prottapp.com) or proto.io for prototyping on a computer, but it's hard to beat the simplicity of a blank sheet of paper.

■ **Apples are sweetest.** All you need to get started in iOS development is a Mac. Coding doesn't take up much storage on a computer, but it's hard to beat the simplicity of a blank sheet of paper.



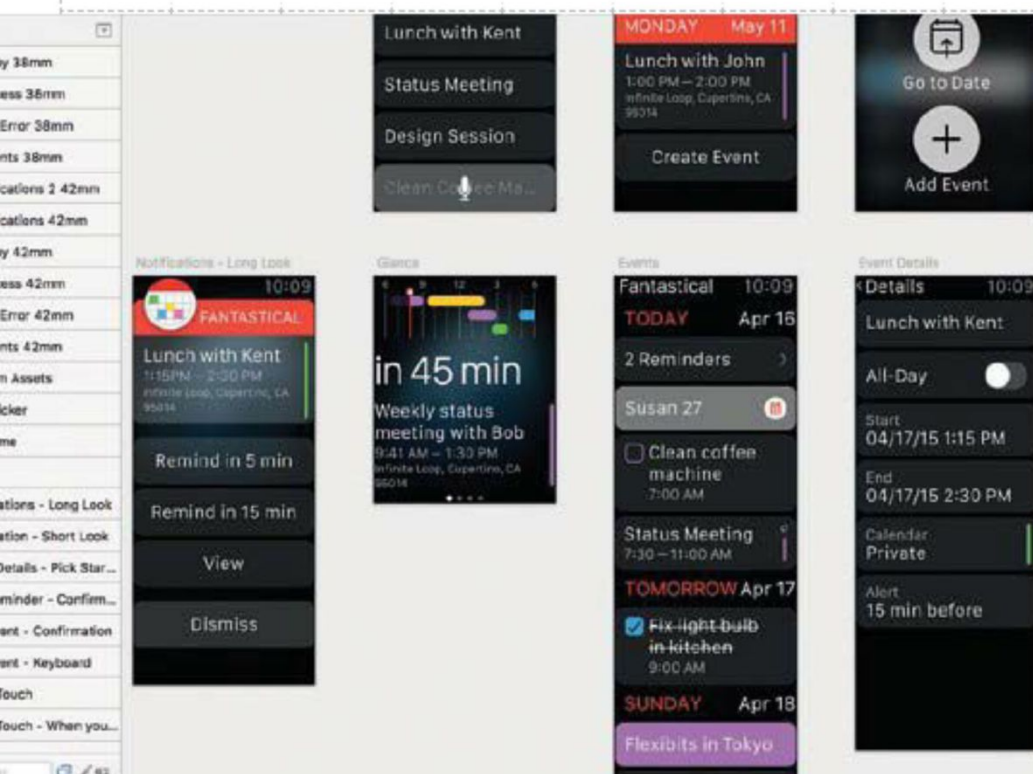
a Mac Mini or iMac will be fine. Check out Apple's refurb store for bargains.

■ **Choose the Xcode factor.** Use Apple's free development suite Xcode over other solutions that promise to let you run your app anywhere, such as Appcelerator or PhoneGap. It may seem more difficult at first, but it makes getting

help easier and will definitely pay off in the long run.

■ **Aim low.** When coming up with an app idea, think about a simple problem and how to solve it. You don't have to create something brand new, but you do have to be making something that interests you. It's the only way to push you through the learning obstacles.

■ **Don't call it Arkansas.** The app's name is very important. Make sure there are no pronunciation ambiguities and that you can easily tell someone its name. You don't want to be spelling it out every time someone asks.

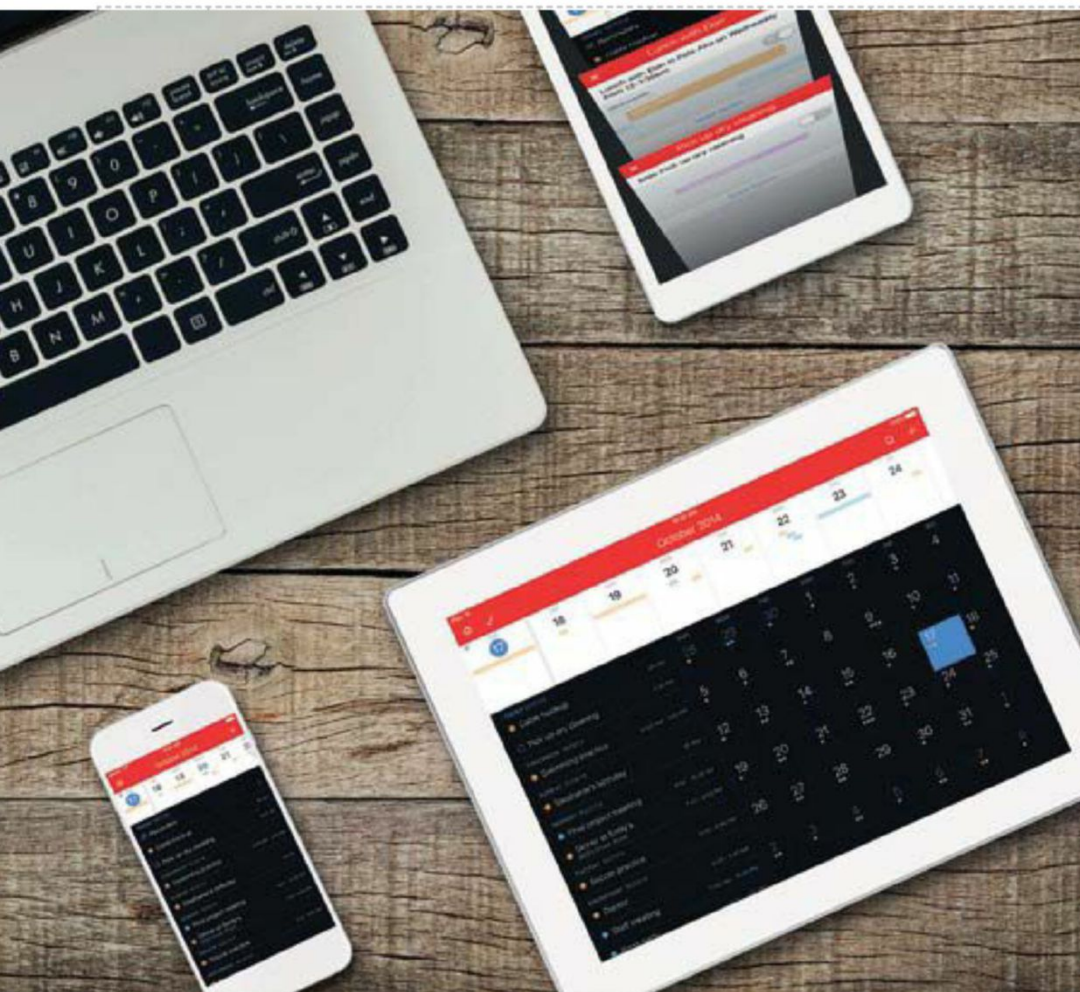


LEARN THE LINGO

■ **Be bilingual.** Apps can be written in two languages: Swift and Objective-C. Swift is newer, but most apps are still written in Objective-C. Learn a bit of both.

■ **Get stuck in.** If you're going the online course route, choose one that encourages you to build apps from the start – udemy.com and lynda.com both have excellent Swift courses.

■ **Nail the basics.** Programming skills apply everywhere. Learn the basic concepts well, as the knowledge will transfer to web design and Android development too.



LEVEL UP WITH...



STACK OVERFLOW

stackoverflow.com

Developers of all types and levels of experience talk over their problems here, so it's a great place to go if you're in need of help. But be warned: it's not always newb-friendly, so make sure you check its library of over ten million programming questions to see if yours has been asked before.

dribbble

DRIBBBLE

dribbble.com

Whether you're looking for logo ideas or just fancy dunking your head in a stream of visual inspiration, this 'show and tell' site for designers should be top of your bookmarks list. There are special deals on design software and you can even filter projects by colour hex codes to see what combinations work for your app's colour scheme.



APP: THE HUMAN STORY

appdocumentary.com

It's not out until December, but this Kickstarter-funded documentary looks as if it could be the app equivalent of *Indie Game: The Movie*. A host of A-list developers have signed up to be involved and its website has a mix of video shorts and interesting stories written by people who have struck app gold.

BUILDING BLOCKS

■ **Get structural.** Apps consist of the user interface, the pieces underneath that power the UI and the glue that holds these two together. The proper term for this is the model view controller (MVC).

■ **Say what?** In other words: the model stores the data, the view is what the user sees (the UI) and the controller updates the model based on input (like a new event in a calendar app).

■ **Step back.** Thinking about MVC as you design your app makes you aware of how it will all work together.



LOOK AND FEEL

■ **Learn from the master.** Look at Apple's own apps as a starting point for good design. Learn how it thinks apps should look and work, and apply those principles to your creation.

■ **Be inclusive.** People have different levels of eyesight. Think about providing the ability to adjust font sizes and offering different display themes.

■ **Experiment with colours.** There are no hard and fast rules about how many colours to use, but sites like UI Palette (uipalette.net) are good for finding combinations that work.



ROAD TESTING...

■ **Take a test ride.** Beta testing is essential for finding bugs and ironing out any kinks. Apple's free TestFlight is great for quick testing, but also has some limitations.

■ **Puck it up.** An alternative is HockeyApp (hockeyapp.net), which provides not only beta testing but also crash reporting, user feedback and analytics.

■ **Be a travelling salesman.** Always keep two versions of your app on your iPhone (one that works and one you're working on) so you can show people and get their feedback.

SUPER
GEEK

BOARD GAMES

Board game addict Quintin Smith explains why the ancient art of table play isn't just coming back, it's blowing up – so now's the perfect time to get involved

Something amazing is happening. After decades of video games being 'the future', game designers the world over are coming back to the dining room table. Board games, card games and pen-and-paper roleplaying games aren't just cool again. Today's games are so good they make their 1980s ancestors look like junk.

There are a lots of reasons why. In an increasingly digital culture, the tactility of board games (like vinyl records) becomes a lot more attractive. The internet's also been vital,

letting people discover, buy and crowdfund niche games where previously their existence would never have been widely known. Most importantly, the games are just beautiful. In the late '90s, meticulously designed German games such as *Settlers Of Catan* reached a wider audience, and ever since then they've got better and better.

The only question is, what do you want to play? *The Resistance* (£20, amazon.co.uk) is a simple card game that casts you and your friends as members of an underground resistance unit,

where some players are government spies trying to get sent on missions to secretly sabotage them from within. You know someone on the team is a spy... but who?

If you're after something more traditional, *Ticket To Ride* (£30, daysofwonder.com) is an even simpler game based on developing a lovely train network, though it can quickly end up feeling like a *Bourne Identity* fistfight in an enclosed space. Any route you claim will prompt other players to scream in protest and swear revenge.

The best thing about the recent board game explosion is that there's now something for everyone, as you can see with the three modern classics below. It's not just that board games are really good fun either. Video games are fantastic, but if anything, our becoming so obsessed with them over the past 30 years has highlighted everything they can't yet do. The improved social dynamics and design space in using physical objects makes playing these games vital and exciting. We can, and should, have both.

JARGON BUSTER

■ EUROGAME

A style of conflict-averse game that originated in Germany, a eurogame is one that sees players competing without ever coming into contact.

■ AMERITRASH

Silly and thematically ambitious games of a style that was popular in 1980s America. If you're playing a space marine or a wizard or you're battling Cthulhu, it's Ameritrash.

■ ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

Crippling indecision that strikes players when playing complex board games. Not to be confused with tactical thinking, analysis paralysis often involves a frustrating absence of any thoughts whatsoever.

■ QUARTERBACKING

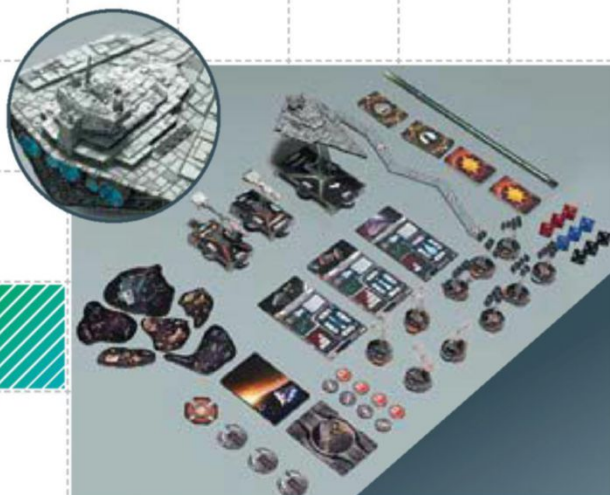
Much-maligned behaviour where a player will suggest what another should do on their turn, to the point of almost playing the game for them.

THE
MONOPOLY
CRUSHER

LORDS OF VEGAS

Cutthroat and hilarious, *Lords Of Vegas* is a game about making millions as a casino mogul in Las Vegas. Players invest money to turn their barren lots into glittering casinos, which pay out in awkward fits and starts. The thing is, unlike Monopoly's dull arc, which always feels like you're being slowly beaten to death by integers, *Lords Of Vegas* allows players to acquire other lots, merge casinos and then try to wrest control of the supercasino from others in unfathomably expensive gambles. Also, if you're ever bored (or shy of a couple of million bucks) you can play craps at your friends' tables.

US\$34 / amazon.com

THE
LUXURY
MODEL

STAR WARS: ARMADA

Would you like to steer a gorgeous, pre-painted Star Destroyer around your table, scattering your friends' X-Wing squadrons with a barrage of turbolasers? Of course you would, and *Star Wars: Armada* is only too keen to help. This is a collectible miniatures game from the best publisher in the business, and in addition to being intensely desirable, it's a tense war game. The gigantic capital ships under your control draw slow curves across the board, while smaller ships cut a path between them and tiny, fragile fighters flit about like mayflies. Perfect for a lazy Sunday.

US\$60 / fantasyflightgames.com



THE
SEASONAL
CLASSIC



DEAD OF WINTER

Part of a popular genre of 'betrayal' board games, *Dead Of Winter* casts everybody as a group of survivors during a frozen zombie apocalypse, and only by working together and managing careful reserves of medicine, food and weaponry will you manage to survive. But there's a problem. Everyone has a secret objective too, and there's the very real possibility that one player's secret will be the failure of the colony. You can cast players into exile on a successful vote... but you'd better hope you're right, or you'll never make it through the long winter alive.

US\$43 / plaidhatgames.com

GET INSPIRED!



THE WEBSITE BOARDGAMEGEEK

With 65,000 games and counting, BoardGameGeek is a comprehensive database of every title ever made. Its ageing design can be tricky to navigate, but do persevere. The forums contain the answer to every question you will ever ask, and the 'Hotness' sidebar is worth keeping an eye on.

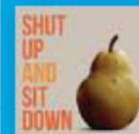
boardgamegeek.com



THE SHOW GENCON

America's largest and best board game convention can be found in Indianapolis every August, and it's absolutely worth the pilgrimage. It's a friendly convention in one of the most hospitable cities in America. Wander the halls, play anything you like, and come home with as many games as you can stagger under.

gencon.com



THE PODCAST SHUT UP AND SIT DOWN

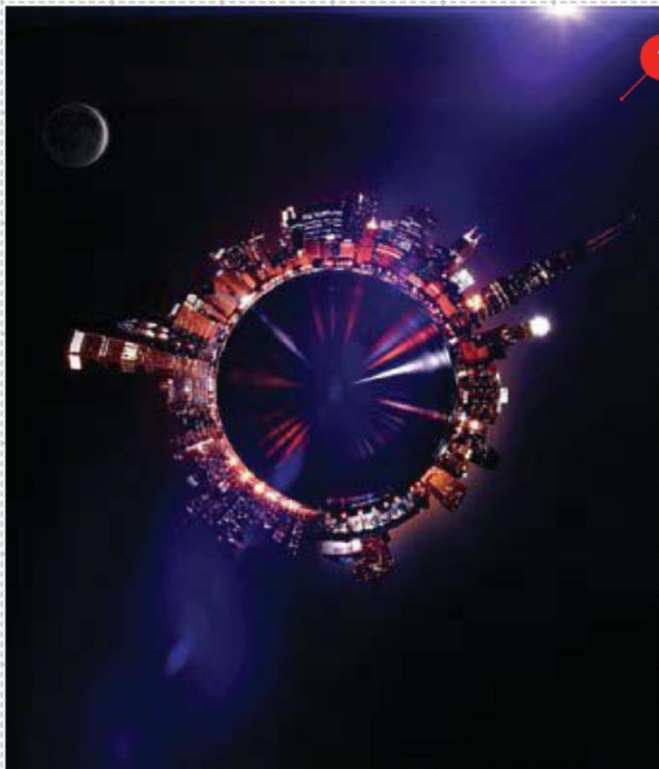
This funny and heartfelt resource for anybody who loves to play has regular reviews, videos and an excellent monthly podcast (starring Quintin Smith and friends). Founded four years ago to teach people about board games, the site now focuses on keeping the hobby accessible and welcoming to newcomers.

shutupandsitdown.com



5-MINUTE HACKS

IF NOTHING ELSE, AT LEAST...



1 MAKE A MINIATURE PLANET

It's never been easier to turn your panoramas into little marble-like worlds that probably already exist in some strange parallel universe (we like to think). Here's how to make one...

...on your iPhone. The excellent Circular+ (US\$1.99, iOS) not only helps you make 'little planets' thanks to effects like lens flares; it also does an invert effect for psychedelic album covers.

...on your Android phone. Spherify (US\$free, Android) takes your existing panoramas and crunches them into small worlds, before serving up a gallery of your physics-defying creations.

...on your computer. A bit trickier, but using GIMP (US\$free, gimp.org) import your 360° panorama, stretch it into a perfect square, rotate 180° and apply 'Polar Coords' in the filters menu.

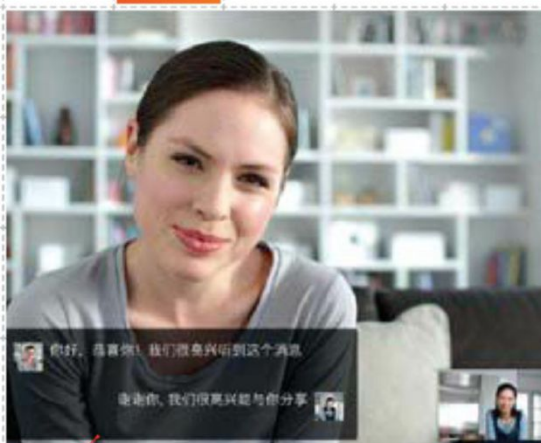
2 BECOME INSTANTLY MULTILINGUAL

If all you can remember from GCSE German is the translation for Black Forest gateau, fear not – Windows 10's new Skype update is here to make you fluent in seven different languages:

On your Windows 10 machine, log into Skype. Now choose your contact, before selecting their language from the drop-down menu.

Check that the globe icon next to the settings wheel is highlighted. This shows that Skype Translator is on. Now start your video chat by clicking on the camera icon.

Using a headset will help Skype to give you the most accurate near-instant translations. As you speak, you'll get a translation in your headphones and on screen. Hello, real-world Babel fish.



2

3 MAKE A GIF-VITATION

It's your party, and you can invite people via a GIF of robots falling over if you want to. Here's the faster alternative to laboriously drafting a witty invite email:

Download FLYR (US\$free, iOS). Search for your party's theme in the lower box. This is a front-end client for Giphy.com, which is basically the Amazon of amusing (and free) GIFs.

If you want to import your own photo or video, press the camera icon. Once you've confirmed the background, add your event's name, date and location.

Now tap the paper aeroplane symbol and send it out over Instagram, text or WhatsApp. Disclaimer: *Stuff* hasn't confirmed a roboparty for 2029 in Detroit, but we're not ruling it out either.



3

TUNE IN NEXT MONTH TO...

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- Line up your action figures
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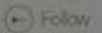
Solo is the *only* drone in the world powered by dual computers, one in the drone, and one in the controller. This intelligence ushers in a new era of automated flight and advanced camera control, we call "Smart Shots" that ensures you get all the footage you want every time you take to the air.



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HOT BUY 1		Samsung Galaxy S6 This is a new era for Samsung, with a smart upgrade that fixes not just things that were amiss in the Galaxy S5, but things that have plagued them for years. No plastic here: its front and back are super-tough Gorilla Glass 4, its sides aluminium. In terms of ergonomics and speaker quality, HTC still wins, but only just. And in the more important areas of camera performance, screen tech and raw power, the Galaxy S6 tramples its rival. We just wish it had a microSD slot.	STUFF SAYS Samsung has proven its critics wrong – the Galaxy S6 is the new benchmark for flagship phones from US\$700 ★★★★★
2		Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ The Edge+ is a larger version of the curvy S6 Edge that wowed us earlier this year; its extra chunk of screen and camera are terrific, while it's also technologically superior to almost everything out there. For a money-no-object phone, it's an absolute corker.	from US\$820 ★★★★★ BEST FOR CUTTING-EDGE GADGETEERS
3		LG G4 The leather-clad LG G4 is a treat for those who want something that looks and feels a bit different. Its camera is incredibly powerful, giving you almost as much control as a DSLR, and the large screen is brilliant... but the battery life holds it back from the top.	US\$760 ★★★★★
4		Apple iPhone 6s "Everything's changed" is pushing it, but within the 6s's familiar body lies a surprising amount of innovation. You'll really notice the A9 processor's added speed, the 12MP camera's scope and quality, and of course, the time-saving delight that is 3D Touch.	from US\$650 ★★★★★
5		OnePlus 2 The second OnePlus phone massively undercuts the big names with performance, software and battery life that far exceed some of the \$600-odd competition. The only thing that might put you off is simply how much of a pain the OnePlus 2 is to get hold of.	from US\$570 ★★★★★
6		HTC One M9+ Having been beaten by the S6, the M9+ is the step forward that perhaps the M9 should have been. With a bigger, more pixel-packed screen and a fingerprint scanner it's welcome at the next-gen superphone party, and it's dressed just as smartly as before.	US\$710 ★★★★★
7		Sony Xperia Z5 Do a higher-megapixel camera and neat fingerprint scanner revitalise this Sony? Nearly but not quite. This is a very good and attractive phone, but its price seems steep when it has no killer feature to offer over other Android kings.	US\$680 ★★★★★☆
8		Apple iPhone 6s Plus The iPhone 6s Plus provides an expansive, immersive experience thanks to its giant screen. But many will find it too cumbersome, which defeats the purpose of those brilliant OIS and Live Photos camera features, and the 6s is clearly the faster phone.	from US\$750 ★★★★★☆
9		Motorola Moto G (2015) The third-gen model takes everything we loved about the previous Moto Gs, sidesteps the performance issues and adds in a great camera and waterproofing to finish off the package. However, the price hike means it's not quite as bargain as before.	US\$180 ★★★★★☆
10		Google Nexus 5 Delivering top-end spec at a mid-range price, the new Nexus has a bigger 4.95in screen, faster processor and a satisfactory 8MP snapper. But the biggest improvement is its chocolatey-smooth Android KitKat 4.4 OS. Astounding value.	from US\$480 ★★★★★ BEST FOR PRICE TAG

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HOT BUY 1		Apple iPad Air 2 The iPad Air didn't really need to be thinner, but that doesn't mean 6.1mm isn't mighty impressive. This combines with reassuring weight and impeccable build quality to make this the most desirable tab on the planet. While the display is the same Retina resolution as before, clever screen tech brings the pixels closer to the surface, and the whole experience is even faster than before thanks to the new A8X chip. Basically it's the best tablet in the world made even better.	STUFF SAYS Thinner, lighter and mightier: Apple's iron-fisted reign at the top of the tablet charts continues unabated from US\$500 ★★★★★	
2		Apple iPad Mini 4 This is the mini tab we've been waiting for. It's 1.4mm thinner and 32g lighter, just the right size for a great portable entertainment hub, and subtle display tweaks will do justice to games and graphic novels alike. Plus it will easily last three days on a charge.	from US\$400 ★★★★★	
3		Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet Sony have added a keyboard to this already stunning tab, so now it's handy for work as well as play, just like a Windows hybrid. Superb battery life, plenty of power, a slim body and super-vivid screen make this the best Android alternative to an iPad Air 2.	from US\$700 ★★★★★	
4		Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7 Slimmer and faster, with a brilliant screen and serious stamina, the Galaxy Tab S2 sees Samsung back in the running for the Android throne. The Xperia Z4 just pips it with its bundled keyboard, but the S2's a versatile, big-screen tab first and foremost.	US\$495 ★★★★★	BEST FOR MAGAZINES AND MOVIES
5		Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from US\$800 ★★★★★	BEST FOR USING ANYWHERE
6		Asus Transformer Book T100 Chi While it may sit in the middle of 10in hybrid range on price, the Transformer Book T100 Chi is classier than the average tablet. Improvements to design, screen and keyboard quality make it a neat choice if you don't mind working with a small screen.	US\$400 ★★★★★	
7		Google Nexus 9 The design isn't as pristine, but this is a real Android contender to rival the iPads. You get the new Android 5.0 Lollipop software, bags of power and a super-sharp display. With 12 hours of video play and two front-facing speakers, it'll be a great film buddy.	US\$400 ★★★★★	
8		Sony Xperia Z3 Tablet Compact A slim, light and reliable couch or commute companion, with a screen that looks brilliant despite being 'only' Full HD. The waterproofing may sway people away from choosing an iPad Mini and every gamer's eyes will light up at the mention of PS4 Remote Play.	US\$430 ★★★★★☆	
9		Microsoft Surface 3 Microsoft finally nailed the hybrid formula with the Surface Pro 3, and now it's translated it to this: a smart, ultra-portable design with the benefits of full Windows 8.1. It's easily the best affordable Surface yet. Just make sure you buy the keyboard.	US\$480 ★★★★★☆	
10		Nvidia Shield Tablet This really is the ultimate gaming tablet. The Shield's sheer power and gaming smarts are incredible, with a console-quality controller and the option of seamless streaming from your PC. All it needs now is more made-for-Shield games...lots more.	US\$300 ★★★★★☆	BEST FOR GAMING ON THE GO

FOR THE FULL REVIEWS AND OUR TABLET BUYING GUIDE, POINT YOUR CLICKER AT STUFF.TV/ME

(*) speck

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HOT BUY 1		LG 65EG960T We knew that one day OLED and 4K would be joined in matrimony, and that the results would be rather special. That day is now upon us and 'special' doesn't quite do it justice. The 65in LG is the new pinnacle of TV tech and performance, combining the unbelievable colours, contrast and brightness of OLED with the super-sharp, ultra-detailed images of 4K to create a picture that's more real and enticing than looking out of the window.	STUFF SAYS It's might pricey, but if you're after the finest flatscreen known to man, this is currently it. US\$13,600 ★★★★★
2		LG 55EC930T Not everyone's got \$13,000 to blow on a flatscreen, and if you have to choose between OLED and 4K it's OLED we'd take right now. The awesome colours, super-deep blacks and amazing contrast will make everything you already watch look extra-amazing.	US\$2,900 ★★★★★
3		Samsung UE65JU7000 If you're going to go 4K, best do it big. Samsung's latest 65in Ultra HD offering is a beauty with the screen on or off, and the open-source Tizen UI is very snazzy. The processor and inputs are still in a separate little unit than can be upgraded in the future.	US\$4,300 ★★★★★
4		Samsung UE55JS8000 Each of its 8.3million pixels is put to good use, filling the screen's handsome real estate with pin-sharp outlines, potent contrast and eye-popping colours. Sound-wise, it's way more powerful than bog-standard flatscreens. Worth the pretty penny? Oh yes.	US\$4,100 ★★★★★
5		Sony KDL-50W800B 4K a bit too new-fangled (or pricey) for you? How about a 50in edge-lit LED LCD with all of Sony's smart features for well under a grand? It's not even like picture quality's been sacrificed – this is an absolute corker of a telly in every way.	US\$700 ★★★★★ BEST FOR AFFORDABLE BRILLIANCE
6		LG 55UF950T This telly comes to life in a flash, and menus don't waste time loading – it's a glossy double-page advert for pixel-packing 4K technology. The punchy palette revels in dazzling hues, deep blacks and Essex-smile whites, and the sound is solid.	US\$1,900 ★★★★★☆
7		Sony KDL-32W700B There's nothing wrong with sticking with a smaller TV, but you should still make sure you pick a good 'un. This 32in Sony is the best, in terms of both picture performance and features, which include 1080p resolution and all the smart stuff you can handle.	US\$450 ★★★★★☆ BEST FOR A SMALLER SCREEN
8		Sony KD-55X8500B If you want to jump on the 4K bandwagon with Sony you could go for the wedge-shaped X9, which is great, but we'd suggest that this slimmer, less intrusive 'entry-level' 55-incher is an even better buy. It's still got all the smart stuff and great performance.	US\$2,000 ★★★★★☆
9		LG 55LA860W From its super-slim, near bezel-less design to its excellent picture and clever, app-stuffed smart TV hub, the 860W does many things right. Then again, it costs two grand, so it damn well should do. If you've got deep pockets, you could do a lot worse.	US\$3,000 ★★★★★☆
10		Bang & Olufsen BeoVision 11 Five grand for a 40in TV might seem a trifle steep, but if that's small change to you the BeoVision 11 is a luxurious delight of design and 1080p picture quality. It also sounds better than any TV we've ever used, and has a built-in surround processor for adding 5.1.	US\$5,000 ★★★★★☆

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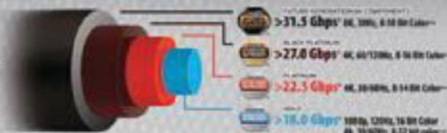
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HOT BUY 1		Apple MacBook Pro 13in (2015) Apple hasn't changed too many parts of the MacBook Pro for 2015. There's a fancy new trackpad and the latest generation of Intel CPUs, which deliver better stamina as well as a chunk more power. This is an incremental upgrade, but given how good the Pro already was, that's more than enough to keep it right at the top of the laptop honours list. If you need power as well as stamina and portability, this is one of the best laptops money can buy.	STUFF SAYS If it ain't broke... it hasn't radically changed, but the Pro's performance and trackpad are top of its class from US\$1,300 ★★★★★
2		Asus ZenBook UX305 Asus knows what it's doing. It knows that the Apple MacBook Air laptops are treading water and the ZenBook UX305 is pretty much everything the 2015 Air should have been, with its fetching aluminium design and as good a display as any US\$1000 laptop.	from US\$1,100 ★★★★★
3		Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from US\$930 (with Type Cover) ★★★★★ BEST FOR USING ANYWHERE
4		Alienware 17 A brute of a machine in every way, the Alienware 17 weighs as much as four MacBook Airs and probably frags harder than 10 of them. Core i7 Haswell processor at 3.4GHz, Nvidia GeForce graphics, up to 32GB of RAM... Our trigger finger's already itching.	from US\$2,150 ★★★★★ BEST FOR SERIOUS GAMERS
5		Apple MacBook (2015) This is no 'Air', nor 'Pro': a clear sign that this is what Apple sees as the future of the ultraportable laptop. And it's certainly very desirable: a 12in lean machine with a superb screen and haptic touchpad. However, the lack of ports can be frustrating.	from US\$1,300 ★★★★★
6		Lenovo Yoga Pro 3 The third entry in the Yoga Pro line refines the laptop/tablet hybrid design with a power-sipping new Intel Core M processor plus slimness and style to make even the MacBook Air look worried. And you can stand it up like a tent. If you want.	US\$1,900 ★★★★★☆
7		Apple MacBook Air 13in (2015) Apple is scraping by with pretty much the same Air design as before. You get a new processor, new connectors and slightly improved battery life, but still no Retina screen. However, if a portable road warrior is what you're after, this is still a great choice.	from US\$1,000 ★★★★★☆
8		Dell XPS 13 Dell's 2015 refresh to its XPS 13 Ultrabook is a revelation. It's practically bezel-less thanks to a 13.3in edge-to-edge "infinity" display that doubles 3200x1800 high resolution touchscreen. We're also totally smitten by the precision trackpad.	US\$1,600 ★★★★★☆
9		Acer Aspire Switch 10 With a 10.1in HD 1280x800 screen, Intel Atom innards, eight hours of battery and compact form factor, this flexible hybrid is for anyone who dreams of MacBook they can pull apart. Excellent for both writing your next novel or watching cat videos on YouTube.	US\$410 ★★★★★☆
10		HP Envy 6 Sleekbook AMD Trinity processors power this Ultrabook alternative, making it cheaper and more battery-filled. The Envy 6 has a quality metal lid and rubberised base, 15.6in screen, and its 6GB RAM gives the 500GB hard drive faster boot times than a similar Intel core i3.	US\$660 ★★★★★☆

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HOT BUY 1		AKG K451 They've actually been around a little while now, but what put the K451 on-ears back on to our radar was an official price drop from US\$220 to US\$130, and a real-world price of just US\$100. For that money they're unbeatable – awesomely agile and punchy sound wrapped up in a subtly stylish and foldable design. Add both standard and three-button control cables for maximising compatibility and there's practically no excuse for not getting brilliant sound.	STUFF SAYS Fantastic sound and great portability at an almost unbeatable price: the perfect PMP upgrade US\$100 ★★★★★	
2		Philips Fidelio M1 MkII Your commute deserves a quality soundtrack, and second-generation Fidelio M1 headphones give you precisely that. There's oodles of detail to the sound and they punch harder than the Hulk. Beats and their ilk can't touch them.	US\$280 ★★★★★	
3		SoundMagic E10S This is actually the third version of SoundMagic's awesome, affordable in-ears – not that you'd tell by looking. They sound even better, though: a little smoother and more refined, with tight, weighty bass. Plus there's now a mic and button for smartphone use.	US\$40 ★★★★★	
4		Sony MDR-EX650AP If you're prepared to pay a little extra for your in-ears, these Sonys are even better than the SoundMagics above. The sound is that bit bigger, a little more detailed and a little more grown-up, and if you don't like the brass finish there's a silver version.	US\$90 ★★★★★	
5		Bose QuietComfort 25 The best kind of silence is the kind you then fill with sweet, sweet music, and that's what the QuietComfort 25s give you. The active noise-cancelling quells office hubbub, air-conditioning and aeroplane hum, and delivers cracking sound in its place.	US\$260 ★★★★★	BEST FOR SHUTTING OUT THE WORLD
6		Sol Republic Master Tracks Really tough things are usually really ugly, which is why the lovely styling of the "virtually indestructible" Master Tracks headphones is so refreshing. Loud, punchy, fast and controlled, the sound is just as attractive as the design. Worth every penny.	US\$200 ★★★★★	
7		Bowers & Wilkins P3 Superb sound and a very solid and achingly stylish design make these the best portable on-ears around. The fact that two cables come in the box – one with a mic and remote for iPhones and one without – only sweetens the already candy floss-like deal.	US\$270 ★★★★★	BEST FOR ON-EAR EXCELLENCE
8		Sennheiser Momentum Black Already known as the on-ears for the dapper man about town, Sennheiser has given its Momentum cans a cool new black and red paintjob. The specs stay the same; expect comfortable cushions and smooth-sounding audio.	US\$440 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR QUALITY AND STYLE IN ONE
9		Beats Studio (2013) The original Beats noise-cancellers have been given a refresh, ditching the AAA batteries and getting a cosmetic overhaul. You can expect all the bass Dre's cans are known for and a lot more punchy detail than the old ones. The foldy earcups make them great for travel.	US\$300 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR BASE, BUCKETS OF IT
10		Sennheiser CX 680i Light, sweat-resistant and with a clever 'EarFin' to keep them in place, the CX 680i in-ears are the perfect partner for sporty music lovers. They sound impressive, too, and have an in-line mic. Try the PMX 680is (US\$50) if you'd prefer a neckband design.	US\$75 ★★★★☆	BEST FOR TUNE-LOVING FITNESS FANS

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SLRs

HOT BUY	1		Olympus OM-D E-M1 The Olympus flagship is armed with the same excellent 16.3MP sensor as its predecessor the E-M5, but has an improved autofocus system, a startlingly good electronic viewfinder and masses of direct controls. Also look out for the E-M10.	US\$1,200 (body only) ★★★★★	
	2		Canon EOS 700D Look, it's a new Canon at No2. No, wait, it's the old one. Actually, it's kind of both. The 700D is a minor upgrade over the 650D, keeping the latter's 18MP sensor, flip-out touchscreen and autofocus during video and adding little beyond a new kit lens. It's still great though.	US\$685 (body only) ★★★★★	BEST FOR ALL-ROUND VALUE
	3		Sony A7R We love this camera. It's light weight but tough and delivers results that outstrip pretty much any other compact system camera on the market. It has a huge full-frame 36.4MP sensor and noise-suppression. Your wallet might weep, but your photo album will sing.	US\$2,300 (body only) ★★★★★	BEST FOR SHOOTING LIKE THE PROS
	4		Nikon D750 It's big and bulky, but otherwise this is one of the most comfortable and intuitive DSLRs money can buy. And with a handy tilt screen and some wireless connectivity features, there's none of the purist snootiness that we saw in the D810.	US\$780 (body only) ★★★★★	
	5		Fujifilm X-T1 There's lots to love about this snapper, from its clever viewfinder and lightning-speed focus to the weatherproof body. One for the analogue lovers, it has actual buttons and dials with no touchscreen. The lack of in-cam image stabilisation is our only complaint.	US\$1,900 (body only) ★★★★★	

COMPACT CAMERAS

HOT BUY	1		Sony DSC-HX60 2014's HX60 isn't a huge departure from its predecessor in terms of its build quality, ease of use, specifications and 30x zoom lens – all of which are excellent. What it does add is NFC and a newer Bionz X processor, making it a slightly nipper performer.	US\$555 ★★★★★	
	2		Fujifilm FinePix X20 The X20 isn't all retro looks and no trousers. It excels in Advanced Auto mode and has manual controls and RAW shooting for creative days. The optical viewfinder, though small, is linked to the 4x zoom and frames well. All this, and it looks damn cool.	US\$460 ★★★★★	
	3		Canon PowerShot S120 Replacing the S110, the S120 is a compact camera for DSLR users on their days off. Its 12.1MP stills, low-light prowess and useful long-exposure modes are welcome, while its slightly laggy lens-ring control and hit-and-miss Wi-Fi features take the shine off.	US\$540 ★★★★★	
	4		Nikon Coolpix AW110 With a metallic body, sturdy locking mechanism and optional camo finish, our new favourite tough cam has got that whole military chic thing nailed. Its army – geddit? – of features include excellent 16MP stills, 1080p@30fps video and glove-friendly controls.	US\$385 ★★★★★	BEST FOR ADVENTUROUS SNAPPERS
	5		Sony DSC-RX100 The 20MP RX100 is just what we're looking for in an advanced compact: pocketable with a huge 1in sensor which serves up great images. After something a bit different? Sony's crazy new lens-without-a-body, the QX100, has much of the same tech.	US\$680 ★★★★★	BEST FOR PORTABLE POWER

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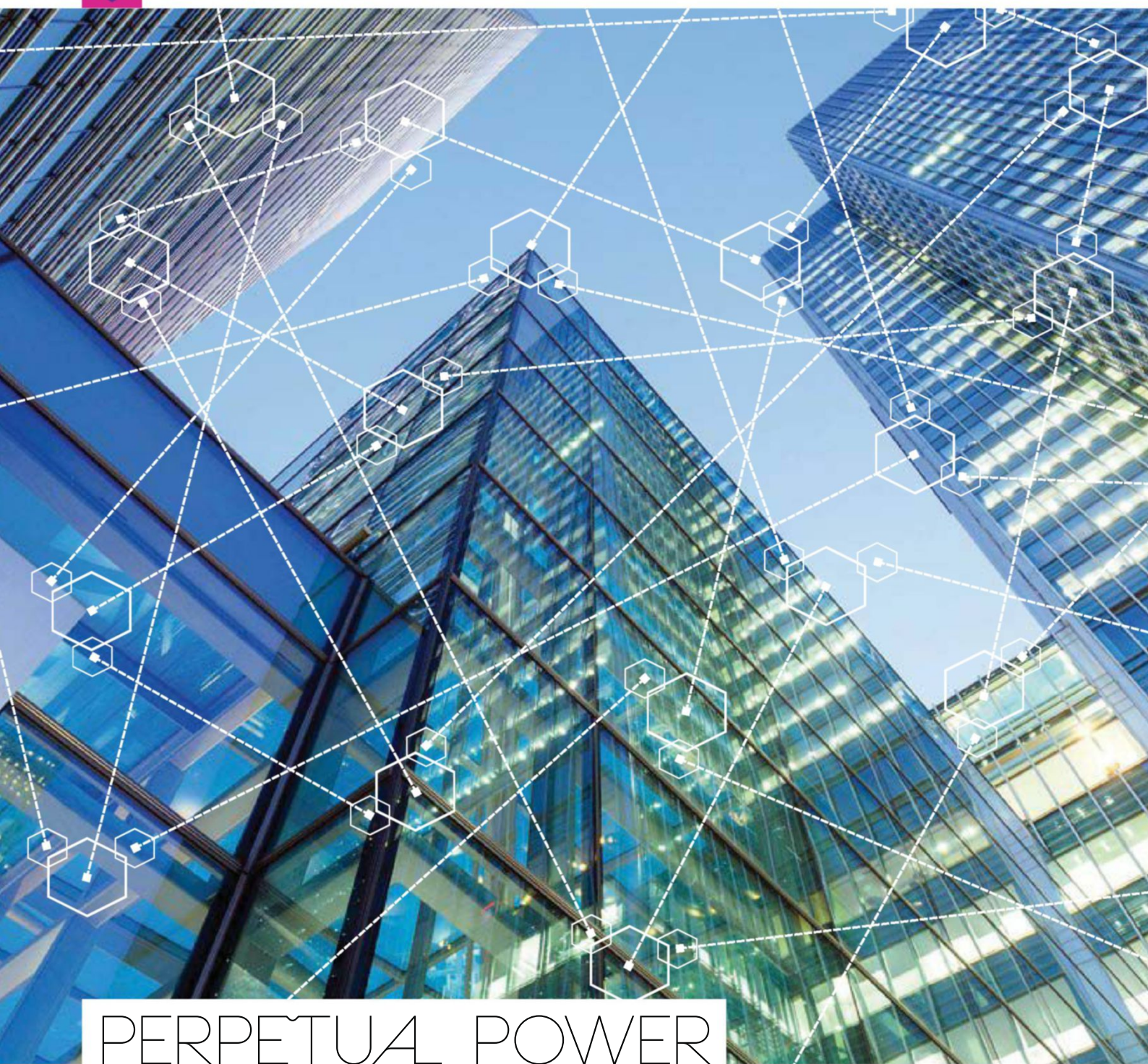
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NEXT BIG THING?



PERPETUAL POWER

M

aybe they could look into getting my phone to last the day first...

Poor you, walking around with a pocket-sized portal to more info than you can read in a thousand lifetimes, and it *only* lasts 12 hours. Still, if news from Drayson Technologies is to be believed, you might be able to stop worrying. Their new energy-harvesting tech apparently grabs power from thin air.

Didn't Tesla already try this (and fail)?

Nikola Tesla, that is, not Elon Musk, and sort of but not really. In the early 20th century,

the genius sparkwizard planned to broadcast wireless electricity from giant towers. Drayson's new Freevolt tech, on the other hand, makes use of the energy that's already being beamed all around us. The space around us is awash with untapped ambient power. Freevolt harvesters (which consist of an antenna, rectifier and power module) can harvest ambient RF energy from digital TV broadcasts, Wi-Fi and mobile signals. The collected power can then be used to perpetually power devices without ever having to charge them or faff around with batteries. Clever, eh?

Excellent, so my next phone will live forever?

Not quite. The power generated by the Freevolt system is minuscule, and won't be enough to power an energy-sucking smartphone. The first device to use the tech, the CleanSpace Tag (US\$95, our.cleanspace) is far simpler. It's a mini sensor that measures and maps the air quality around you, and is completely powered by surrounding radio waves. This could be the first step towards potentially larger devices like watches topping themselves up over time. Fast forward to perpetually powered wearables, and we've got ourselves a game-changer.

[Words Esat Dedezade]

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